GAME OF THE MONTH: Duke Nukem 3D

21 REVIEWS!

PC GAMES

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Phantasmagoria
A Puzzle of Flesh
The Next Chilling Episode

GUIDED TOUR

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9 Tribeca's debut sports spectacular graphics, celebrity voices

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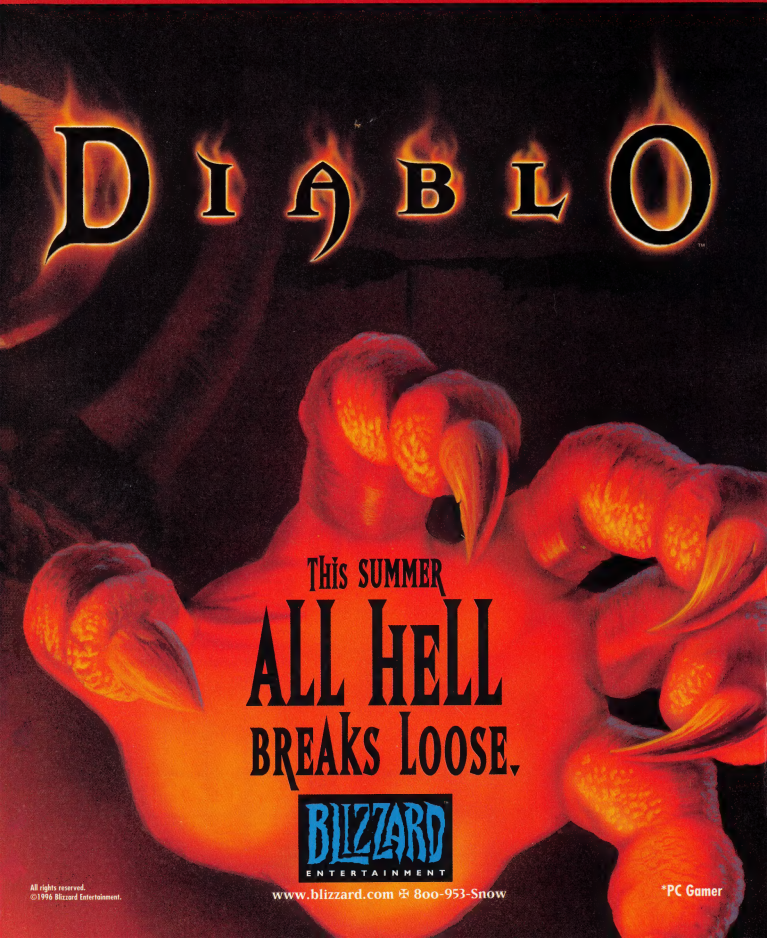

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*PC Gamer

JULY 1996

PC GAMES

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PC GAMES™ VOLUME 3, NUMBER 7

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PLAY the Demo on the disc

SEE MORE Online http://www.pcgamesmag.com

Editor's Page

Fredric Paul

Pretty Pictures

This month, *PC Games* brings you not one, but two of our signature Guided Tours. Although the stories may share a similar format, the products they introduce you to—GTE Entertainment's Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations and Tribeca Interactive's 9—couldn't be more different.

According to Senior Reviews Editor Steve Klett, who wrote the story, Timelapse is a classic adventure game in the mold of Myst, designed to deliver tough puzzles and challenging gameplay. (See story on page 36, and check out the demo on the *PC Games* CD-ROM.)

The unusual 9, on the other hand, is much more character-driven, and features high-profile voice talent like Cher, Christopher Reeve, and Aerosmith's Steven Tyler. Features Editor Christine Grech says she's never seen another game quite like it. (See story on page 32, and look for a demo on next month's CD-ROM.)

But if you take a closer look, you'll notice something the two games do have in common: They're both drop-dead gorgeous. Not just good-looking for a computer game, but incorporating a level of design excellence sure to impress just about anyone. While laying out the Guided Tours, *PC Games* Art Director Kathy Marty just kept shaking her head and muttering: "They're so cool. I can't believe how far computer game graphics have come in the last couple of years."

Even better, both games use their artistic excellence not just to impress, but to further the impact of their stories and concepts. Both games rely on enticing players into fanciful new worlds—a series of five ancient and/or imaginary civilizations in Timelapse, the bizarre Last Resort in 9.

Let's face it: There's a lot of disbelief to be suspended here. Vibrant, detailed, and inspired graphics are an integral tool for making the fanciful real, or at least real enough. The editorial team at *PC Games* doffs its hats to the artists and graphic designers of Timelapse and 9, and we're hoping that the games themselves live up to their state-of-the-art images. We'll be watching.

FP

How We Rate

PC Games uses a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone who's gone to school knows what our grades mean without resorting to an in-depth explanation or clever chart. An A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in five key areas.

Gameplay: How good are the game's interface and control scheme, and how much fun is it to play?

Getting Started: How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)

Graphics: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?

Sound Check: How good are the game's sound effects and musical score, and how well do they fit the game?

Overall Grade: Taking everything into account, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

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Age: 20-Something	

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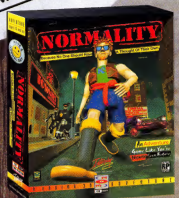
District #13

The Normality Police Can Be Contacted At: **http://www.interplay.com**



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NYP3

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ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR

– COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

"LEGEND HAS PULLED OFF A STUNNING ACHIEVEMENT THAT WILL SET THE STANDARD IN ADVENTURE GAMING FOR YEARS TO COME."

– COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

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GAME OF THE YEAR

– JERRY POURNELLE, BYTE MAGAZINE, 1996

"OUTSTANDING AND SUSPENSEFUL!... BEAUTIFUL VISUALS AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING PLOT."

– PC GAMER, 1996

"A MUST-HAVE FOR *STAR TREK* FANS!"

– STRATEGY PLUS, 1996

"ENGROSSING."

– USA TODAY, 1996

"IF YOU MISS THIS GAME, YOU WILL MISS ONE OF THE BEST ADVENTURES OF THIS DECADE."

– COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

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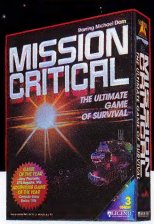

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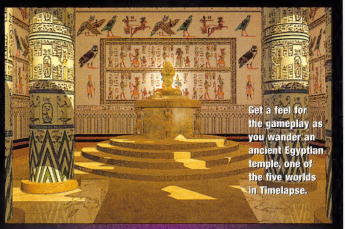
PC GAMES On Disc

Demo of the Month



Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations

GTE Entertainment, Win/Win 95

Beyond its absolutely stunning visuals, Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations breaks new ground with an intriguing storyline and the promise of extensive gameplay. Our four-part demo will help you decide for yourself if Timelapse is the elusive "Myst-killer" adventure gamers have been waiting for.

First, check out the Overview to learn the story of the game. You'll follow a missing archaeologist through his time machine to discover the mysterious links between the fabled lost city of Atlantis and the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Maya, Anasazi, and Easter Island. Then wander through the Gallery, a digital cornucopia of screen shots from the game's five worlds. For a taste of gameplay, go to the Game Demos section and try your hand at a pair of stand-alone puzzles.

The fully interactive Timelapse demo also lets you experience a 3-D, 360-degree walkthrough of a fabulously detailed Egyptian temple. You'll love what you see, but it's not all eye candy—you've got some real work to do. If you want to make it past the venom-spitting cobra, you'll have to carefully observe your surroundings for clues and useful objects.

For a deeper look into Timelapse, take PC Games' exclusive Guided Tour on page 36.

What's on the Disc?

Demo of the Month

Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations (GTE Entertainment, Win/Win 95)

Action Games

EarthSiege 2 (Sierra On-Line, Win 95)
Assault Rigs (Sony Interactive, DOS)
Star Rangers (Interactive Magic, DOS)

Adventure Games

Zork: Nemesis (Activision, DOS)
Azrael's Tear (Mindscape, DOS)
Chronicles of the Sword (Sony Interactive, DOS)
Normality (Interplay, DOS)
Philip Marlowe Private Eye (Simon & Schuster/Byron Preiss, Win)

Fly & Drive Games

Big Red Racing (Domark, DOS)
Navy Strike (Empire Interactive Entertainment, DOS)
Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2 (Sierra On-Line, Win 95)

Simulation Games

Afterlife (LucasArts, Win 95)
Simisle (Maxis, DOS/Win 95)

Sports Games

VR Soccer '96 (Interplay, DOS)
Bruce Jenner's World Class Decathlon (Interactive Magic, Win 95)

Getting Started

1. Start Windows and insert the CD-ROM in the disc drive
2. Select Run from the Program Manager's File menu
3. Type "d:\install" in the Command Line box and press Enter

Getting Around

Click on the *PC Games* icon to load the CD-ROM. The Welcome screen lists each game demo and what platform it runs on. Click on the disclaimer button to read all the legal mumbo jumbo.

Click anywhere else on the Welcome screen to bring up the Main screen. You can explore any of the 16 Hot Demos by clicking on the picture of the game you want to try, or click the yellow arrows on the left and right sides of the demo screen to scroll through your choices.

Each game icon brings up a description of the game and a list of the minimum system requirements. On some demos (mostly in Windows and Windows 95), you can simply click the Play button to begin playing the game. On others, click the Install button to put the game on your hard drive. In some cases, you'll have to go to DOS to complete the installation.

You can also navigate through the demos using the buttons on the gray task bar on the left side of the screen. The task bar offers access to the other parts of the disc as well, including a special subscription offer; Express Yourself, a comments area; America Online; and the Buyer's Hotline, a listing of toll-free numbers for getting more information about your favorite games.

THE CRITICS CAN'T ESCAPE THE SPELL...

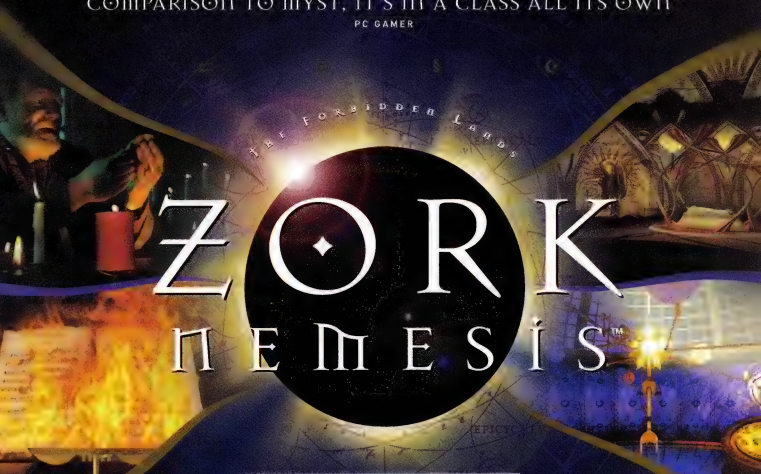
"A MYSTERY SO INSCRUTABLE IT MAKES MYST LOOK LIKE A WORD JUMBLE."
NEWSWEEK

"ZORK NEMESIS IS A BRILLIANT EXAMPLE OF WHAT A GRAPHIC ADVENTURE GAME SHOULD BE."
PC ENTERTAINMENT/GAMES

"I CAN'T OVEREMPHASIZE HOW SPECTACULAR ZORK NEMESIS LOOKS."
CD-ROM TODAY

"THIS GAME CAPTURES YOUR ATTENTION WITH ITS STUNNING GRAPHICS AND HAUNTING AUDIO..."
COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

"ALTHOUGH IT'S SURE TO RECEIVE PLENTY OF COMPARISON TO MYST, IT'S IN A CLASS ALL ITS OWN"
PC GAMER



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Letters

Question of the Month: New Hardware Needed?

Do you think today's games require computers that are too powerful and too expensive? Or are you willing to upgrade your system to enjoy the latest entertainment? Let us know your opinion by writing to us at Letters to the Editor, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; faxing us at 415-349-7482; or e-mailing us at pcgamesletters@iftw.com.

Gameplay, Not Pictures

I'm getting tired of playing dull, boring games with great graphics. It seems that all gamemakers care about now is how good a game looks, not how fun it is to play. Most games lack any kind of plot, and all the gamemakers focus on is "find them, shoot them, kill them." When will there be games you can play over and over again and still not get bored with?

I purchased Eye of the Beholder back in 1991 and still play it often. It may not have the best graphics or sound effects, but it still has great gameplay and a great story. When will games like this come back?

WastedTip@aol.com

They'll come back when enough gamers demand it. Just being angry isn't enough—if you really hate a game, you need to let the company know about it. We'd suggest writing or e-mailing gamemakers with specific comments about gameplay, graphics, storyline and other elements of the game. —*Ed.*

Strategy & Tactics

I like your magazine a lot, but recently the articles have been bland, the reviews are less current, and you rarely have game cheats.

Robert Khecht Schmidt

RobertKS@aol.com

We've had so many requests for hints and cheats that last month, PC Games *instituted a regular Strategy & Tactics section. Every issue, this section brings you tips and cheats for new and old games. This month, check page 82 for help with The Hive, Chaos Overlords, and more. Also, don't forget to visit our Web site at* **http://www.pcgamesmag.com** *for extra cheats and hints. Finally, look closely and you'll see that* PC Games *has the most timely and complete collection of game reviews around. Go ahead—check the competition.* —*Ed.*

It's Difficult

I've been buying this magazine since it first came out, and I just want to say that you're doing a wonderful job. But after reading your game reviews, I often wonder how difficult a game is. It might be useful if you added a difficulty rating to your game ratings.

Aaron Block

ablock@Onramp.NET

It's not that simple. For one thing, difficulty is very subjective—what's hard for one player may be easy for the next. Also, most games have multiple difficulty settings. In those cases where a particular game is extremely difficult or easy, we mention that fact in the review itself. If more readers would like to see a difficulty rating, we're open to it. Let us know. —*Ed.*

Network Play Second

I agree wholeheartedly with your comments on Command & Conquer in particular and gaming in general ("Network Play Not Enough," April 1996, page 22). I think C&C is a great game, but after the first couple of missions, it's just a matter of managing your resources until you can harvest enough Tiberium to create an insurmountable force. In the last GDI mission, I found where NOD was storing all of its money, blew a hole in the wall, and cranked out engineers to capture all of the money I could carry!

I also believe Doom II wouldn't have been as popular without the network-play capability. I agree with you when you say that programmers should concentrate on gameplay first, network play second.

Stephen A. Telford

stephen_telford@scc.senate.gov

Share the Wares

I realize the focus of your magazine is on commercial software rather than shareware. However, I think you are ignoring a large part of the gaming world when you neglect some of the try-before-you-buy games. While it certainly costs less to make a poor choice downloading something off the Net, it still takes time. I think it would be nice if we could see a few more reviews of some of the big releases on the Net, like Duke Nukem 3D, Seek and Destroy, and others that are due out soon. These reviews will at least let people know about some of the new shareware out there.

Derek Wight

dwight@ftcnet.com

PC Games *reviews shareware as time and space permit. If you read our April issue, you may have seen Senior Reviews Editor Steve Klett's review of the Duke Nukem 3D shareware in his exclusive cover story on the new game ("Duke Nukem 3D Exposed!"* PC Entertainment, *April 1996, page 30).* —*Ed.*

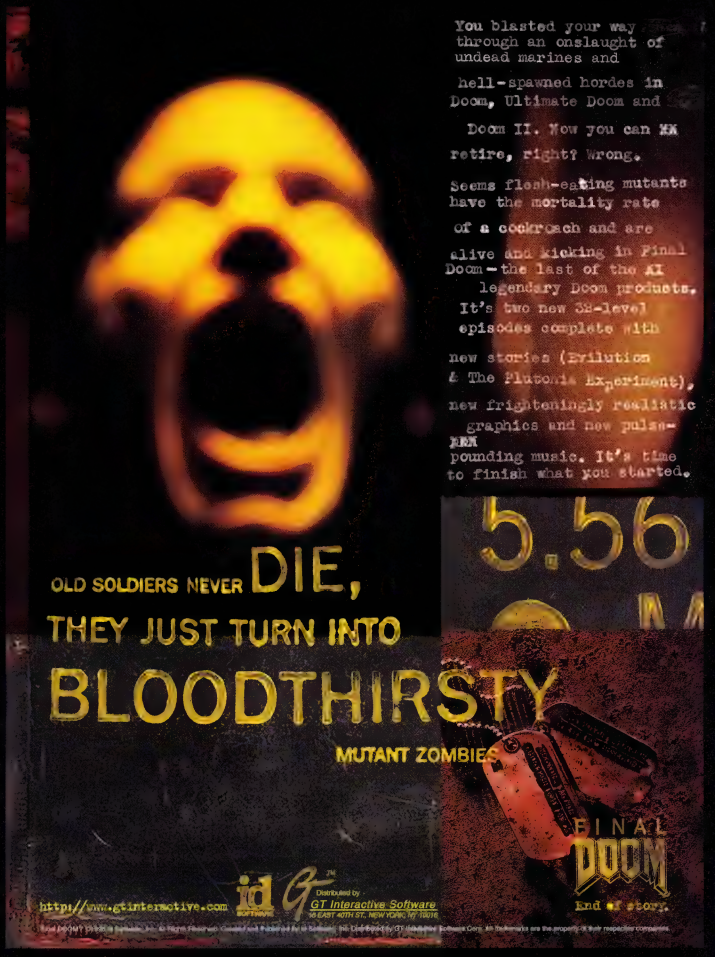
Whoops

You made a mistake in your review of College Slam (*PC Entertainment*, May 1996, page 76). This game is "(a) A seemingly senseless marketing move," and it does give you "(b) A new appreciation for the personalities of overpaid superstars." But it isn't "(c) Activision's new College Slam." It's Acclaim's new College Slam.

NRyan368@aol.com

You're right, we goofed. Sorry. At least we got it right in the fact box. —*Ed.*

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL SIZLEY


You blasted your way through an onslaught of undead marines and hell-spawned hordes in Doom, Ultimate Doom and Doom II. Now you can retire, right? Wrong.
Seems flesh-eating mutants have the mortality rate of a cockroach and are alive and kicking in Final Doom - the last of the legendary Doom products. It's two new 32-level episodes complete with new stories (Evilution & The Plutonia Experiment), new frighteningly realistic graphics and new pulse-pounding music. It's time to finish what you started.
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MUTANT ZOMBIES
5.56
FINAL DOOM
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GAME NEWS

SlamScape may be better suited to the PlayStation than to the PC.

scouting REPORT

From Web to Disc

SPQR, the Internet mystery game on Time Warner's Pathfinder site (**www.pathfinder.com/twep/rome**), is coming to CD-ROM later this year. GT Interactive has bought the rights to put the CyberSites game on disc. Launched in July 1995, SPQR has generated more than 12 million hits. According to GT, the agreement represents the first time a game designed for the Internet will move to disc. GT plans to work with CyberSites on future CD-ROM titles with Internet components.

Microsoft Boosts Force Feedback

In a move sure to speed the development of force-feedback joysticks, Microsoft has bought Exos, a company developing force-feedback technology for game control devices. Who knows–Microsoft could be working on a force-feedback version of its SideWinder Pro joystick.

Pirates

They may not fly the Jolly Roger, but computer- and video-game pirates worldwide cost U.S. software companies $2.5 billion last year, says the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA). That's a quarter of the $10 billion the entertainment software industry brings in each year. According to the IDSA, many of the worst offenders are located in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Paraguay, and Mexico.

Online Card Games

The Kesmai Corporation has

continued on page 14

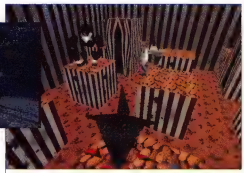
Viacom Stays Tied In

While many companies are starting to rethink the value of developing games around movies, books, and TV shows, media giant Viacom is plunging ahead with a slew of new titles, mostly for Windows 95, based on everything from MTV to cyberpunk novels.

In fact, Viacom has not just one, but three new games with MTV connections. **Aeon Flux**, a 3-D action/adventure based on the lovely but lethal *Liquid Television* cartoon character, is being developed by France's Cryo Interactive. **MTV's SlamScape**, a fast-action console game being ported to the PC, has a soundtrack by God Lives Underwater and a clever mix of humor and horror. Finally, there's **Joe's Apartment**, where you play a friendly bunch of cockroaches in their "quest to infest" all of the apartments in Joe's New York building. This adventure game mixes animation and video as it reprises the MTV series and the new Warner Bros. movie. All three games are due in the fourth quarter.

Viacom has publishing interests, too, and **Snow Crash** is based on Neal Stephenson's best-selling science-fiction novel. This action/adventure is set in the bizarre cyberspace of the Metaverse, where imagination rules and the laws of physics don't apply. Fight the malevolent Snow Crash virus through more than 30 wild levels, complete with hi-res 3-D graphics, secret missions, multiple weapons, and 30 different enemies. Log on this fall.

The Divide: Enemies Within features Mech-style robots.



In Snow Crash's Metaverse, physics doesn't apply.

Of course, not every Viacom game is based on something else. The company is also readying a real-time strategy game called **Enemy Nations**, a futuristic motorcycle racing game named **DeathDrome**, and **The Divide: Enemies Within**, a Mech-style platform game. They should all be out this year. (Viacom New Media; 800-469-2539) —*Fredric Paul*

Gaming for Dollars

Ever wonder what the people who make computer games actually earn? Well, according to Professional Employment, a Chicago-based recruiting firm, experienced gamemakers do pretty well. A couple of hits on your résumé will propel you to the top of the range, and most jobs include incentives if your game does well. Here's the lowdown:

- Producers: $60,000–$125,000
- Lead Programmers: $60,000–$95,000
- Programmers: $40,000–$80,000
- Composers: $45,000–$75,000
- Writers: $40,000–$75,000
- Designers: $35,000–$60,000
- Art Directors/Creative Directors: $100,000–$200,000
- SGI Animators: $25,000–$100,000

Games Are for Gamers

The PC gaming industry seems to have a problem. Overall home computer sales growth is declining and only a small minority of home computer buyers play games.

Most industry observers estimate that there are only a couple million dedicated computer gamers in the entire world. It's almost as if everyone had TV sets, but didn't watch them.

Why do relatively few people play PC games? One theory is price. Many games cost $50 or more, compared to $15 for an audio CD or a couple bucks to rent a movie. Another possibility is time. It can take 40 hours or more to play through a typical adventure game, more time than many busy people can spare. And, in a Catch-22, shorter games are not perceived as worth the price.

But Peter Molyneux, head of Britain's innovative Bullfrog, the Electronic Arts unit that developed such popular games as Theme Park and Magic Carpet, says the real reason is that most games are designed for gamers, not for people who don't play games. And while designing games for gamers makes obvious short-term sense, it doesn't help expand the market.

According to Molyneux, most of today's games are far too difficult for average computer owners, so non-gamers who try them quickly lose interest. Relatively straightforward adventure games such as Full Throttle often require specialized knowledge of adventure-game syntax to understand how to play. Even big-budget space operas with high production values and full-motion video, like Wing Commander IV, present a daunting learning curve.

That's why games that rely on concepts to which people bring their own knowledge, such as music, sports, or even romance, make it easier for new players. Similarly, video-based games like Sierra On-Line's Phantasmagoria series (see our exclusive preview of the next installment, The Puzzle of the Flesh, page 40) and Philips' Voyeur II (see review, page 58), as well as online games like MGM Interactive's upcoming Outer Limits game (see "Online Weirdness," page 16) are being touted as more friendly to new players; they've got simpler controls and human opponents. So far, though, playing computer games remains a relatively rare pastime. —*Fredric Paul*

NORMAN LOCHART/ILLUSTRATION

Merry Mayhem

"Everything you see is destructible!" That's the pitch for **Mayhem**, the new isometric-view action/strategy game from England's Mirage Technologies. It's your job to rid the Earth of rebelling biomechanical servants, and you've got hundreds of weapons and a three-man team to help you do it. Of course, the baddies are smart and tough, and there are thousands of them. As many as a dozen players can play over a network.

—*Fredric Paul*

Everything will blow up in Mayhem.

LEADER BOARD

The best-selling PC games and our editors' recommendations

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** (Blizzard Entertainment; DOS CD; 800-953-7669; $50)	3	4	A
2	**Civilization II** (MicroProse; 800-879-7529; DOS CD; $49.99)	1	–	A
3	**Myst** (Broderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	2	23	A
4	**Descent II** (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; $49.95)	–	1	B+
5	**Wing Commander IV** (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $69.95)	1	2	A
6	**C&C: The Covert Operations** (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $19.95)	1	–	B+
7	**Command & Conquer** (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	12	5	C
8	**MechWarrior 2** (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS CD; $59.95)	7	7	A-
9	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	5	8	B
10	**NBA Live '96** (EA Sports; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $49.95)	10	2	B

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games in 1,300 retail stores for March 1996. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data

Editors' Recommendations

TITLE	OUR RATING
Duke Nukem (FormGen; 800-263-2390; DOS CD; $39.99)	A
Jane's AH-64D Longbow (Jane's Combat Simulations; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $64.95)	A-
Advanced Tactical Fighters (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	B+
Terra Nova (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	A-
Conquest of the New World (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; $49.95)	A

scouting REPORT

signed a deal to add Masque Publishing's multiplayer casino and classic card games to Kesmai's ARIES platform. Initially, Kesmai will adapt three popular versions of Casino Poker for multiplayer online use. Players will meet in a lounge and form groups to play together at a virtual table, or join existing games. Other casino-style games will be adapted later this year. You'll be able to play on America Online or on Kesmai's Web site at **http://www.kesmai.com.**

SpeedyROM

If you've got Windows 95 on your PC, you can use Quarterdeck's new SpeedyROM to dramatically hasten load times. SpeedyROM caches CD-ROM data on your hard drive, and the company claims it provides smoother graphics and audio performance. (Quarterdeck; 310-309-3700; **http://www.quarterdeck.com**; $39.95)

The MGM Lion Roars

MGM Interactive is working on a couple of new action games for release later this year. H.O.S.T. is a multiplayer top-down-style shooter for Windows 95. Developed by England's Eurocom Developments and designed to be played over a local-area network or the Internet, H.O.S.T. features an apocalyptic battle among killer robots. Cyberthug, meanwhile, is based on a creature from MGM's upcoming movie *Fled*. Developed by Saffire, Cyberthug is intended to mix fast action with a strong story.

3-D War Update

As the battle of the 3-D accelerator cards heats up this summer, ATI Technologies is counting on help from IBM and Activision. IBM will include ATI's 3D Rage card in many of its new Aptiva home computers later this year.

continued on page 16

STAR TALK with Dennis Weaver

From McCloud *to Great Western Bank, Dennis Weaver has portrayed many a tough guy. Now his latest role casts the acting veteran as a cop in Philips Media's* **Voyeur II**, *the steamy sequel to Voyeur, one of the first computer games to star big-name Hollywood actors. Instead of* I Spy's *Robert Culp, though, the sequel uses a whole new cast, headlined by Jennifer O'Neil, David Groh, and Weaver.* PC Games *editor in chief Fredric Paul talked with the gravel-voiced Weaver about his role in the game and his unique path to computer games.*

PC Games: Can you tell me about your character in Voyeur II?

Dennis Weaver: Well, my role is [Sheriff John Parker], the law enforcement officer who solves the crime, or wraps everything up.

PCG: Do you appear throughout the game or just at the end?

DW: I do some voiceovers on a radio show early on in the script, but it's mostly at the end. But when I say "the end," you have to ask, "Well, which end?" because there are several.

PCG: Are you in all of the endings or just some of them?

DW: I'm in all eight endings, but they're all different, as you'll see when you play the game.

PCG: Aside from the multiple endings, how was this project different from all the other stuff that you've done?

DW: Well, it wasn't really that different from everything else. Voyeur II is shot much like a movie, except that everything is mostly in master shots.

PCG: What do you mean "master shots"?

DW: Well, if you don't pop in for close-ups, you're not able to get reverses [alternating over-the-shoulder close-ups]. You have to utilize the actors in such a way that you don't use reverses. So you stage it so the actors themselves give you the equivalent of a reverse—so they move in such a way that a reverse is not required.

PCG: Did you enjoy the experience?

DW: Yeah, it was fun. It was very challenging, and sometimes very confusing. I was lucky that I had a very good director who was on top of it and knew exactly what he wanted from me, and from the script.

PCG: Who was the director?

DW: Weeeellll, I'm a proud father. It was my son Robbie.

PCG: What was it like to work with your son?

DW: It was absolutely wonderful. You know, my son was the first one to use live actors in interactive games, and he's extremely good with actors. You know, he has an acting background himself, so he understands actors and their problems and acting values and the interrelationships between people and characters.

That's somewhat rare in this business. Many directors—especially in interactive games—don't have a background in acting. I think to be a good director, that's extremely important.

PCG: I assume it was Robbie who got you interested in computer games?

DW: Well, basically, my interest evolved out of my son's interest. He's a high-tech person. I'm not.

PCG: Do you play computer games yourself?

DW: No. I've seen them in action; I've seen other people do them.

PCG: Now that you've done a game with your son, would you consider doing more?

DW: Well, yeah. It's an acting job. I love to act.

PCG: Are you ready to play a cybermonster as well as a good-guy cop?

DW: I would have to look at the script—and see how much money it paid.

PCs vs. Video Games

According to a survey by the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association, 88% of teenagers would rather have a PC than a video game machine.

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PHILIPS

MATURE M ABES 17+

This 2-disk set for Windows CD-ROM contains 2 complete games and 3-D panoramic graphics.

scouting REPORT

Activision, meanwhile, has created a version of MechWarrior 2 designed to run on the 3D Rage. ATI will bundle the game with the card. (ATI Technologies; 905-882-2600; $299)

Major League Soccer

BMG Interactive Entertainment is counting on the new Major League Soccer (MLS) to jumpstart its new line of sports games. Starting next spring, the company will publish several MLS games over the next four years. All of them will be created by Z-axis, which worked on the John Madden Football series. (BMG Interactive Entertainment; 415-330-0470)

New CompuServe Games

NTN Communications, a maker of interactive games played in bars and other public venues, has signed a deal with CompuServe to add at least 24 interactive games to the online service during the next two years. Countdown, an online trivia show, and QB1, an NFL play-along football game, will headline NTN's CompuServe lineup.

In addition, CompuServe has arranged to carry Kesmai's Air Warrior online flight sim. The game is also available on AOL and the World Wide Web (see "Air Warrior Takes Off!" *PC Entertainment*, May 1996, page 28). Eventually, other Kesmai games may follow Air Warrior onto CompuServe.

Playmates of the Month

Playmates Interactive Entertainment is working on several new games for release this fall. In addition to Battle Arena Toshiden, Into The Void, and Earthworm Jim 1 & 2: The Whole Can o' Worms, which should be on store shelves now, the company is readying The Mortificator, Powerslave, and

continued on page 18

Inscape Gets Normal

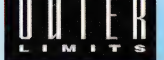
This scene from The Drowned God holds keys to the conspiracies you must solve.

How does a company go from something as weird and heady as a game featuring an underground band called the Residents to a straight-ahead action shooter? Pretty much just by going ahead and doing it, which is what Inscape plans to do with its new line of Windows 95 games, mostly set to release this Christmas.

Not that they won't look like Inscape games. The Time-Warner affiliate's first two releases, the Residents' Bad Day on the Midway and The Dark Eye, gained Inscape a reputation for twisted, high-quality graphics and unusual stories, and the new batch of games does feature a couple in the same vein. **The Drowned God**, set for release in early 1997, is an adventure that takes you through all of the great conspiracy theories of the century—the JFK assassination, the Roswell alien autopsy, and so on. Likewise, **The Egyptian Jukebox**, from the puzzle book by Nick Bantock (of Griffin and Sabine fame), asks you to solve a bunch of graphical puzzles found in the drawers of an old jukebox that plays hits from the 1950s through the '70s; together, the clues and tunes help you find the machine's missing owner. And the company will finally bow its long-delayed, quirky **DEVO Presents Adventures of the Smart Patrol** in August.

Inscape is also moving into more standard game genres, albeit with advanced, near-cinematic graphics. **Ravage** is a superb-looking action-adventure that has you heading off the alien Necron race's plan to take over government installations in 21st-century Washington, D.C. **Squeezils** is a find-and-shoot action game with a twist—you're a flying squirrel, and you're spitting nuts at other Robo-Squeezil squirrels in a race to reach Nutscape. And **Assassin 2015** is a first-person shooter that strips away strategy elements like power-ups and ammo to let you blast your way out of a botched assassination attempt. Look for a shareware level now at Inscape's Web site at http://pathfinder.com/inscape. (Inscape; 800-693-3253) *—Donald St. John*

Online Weirdness



You know how that creepy voice on *The Outer Limits* TV show says, "We control your TV set"? Well, late this year or early next year, they're going to make a grab for your PC and modem, too.

Outer Limits Online: Beyond Resurrection, a real-time, 3-D, multiplayer Internet game, is coming from MGM Interactive for online services such as America Online or CompuServe as well as the MGM Interactive site on the Internet's World Wide Web. Designed to let players interact with and make changes to an existing online world, the game will use a new game engine from Worlds Inc., the folks who developed AlphaWorld, the 3-D Web community software (see *Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 12). The game's writers, Jeff Sullivan and Bruce Onders, describe Outer Limits Online as "a visual MUD," or multi-user dungeon.

A sequel to the "Resurrection" episode (which first aired in March), the plot is somewhat complicated. According to Sullivan and Onders, the setup goes something like this: Humanity has been wiped out due to biological warfare, and the remaining androids decide that the best way to preserve the Earth is to prevent mankind from returning. A couple of androids have other ideas, however, and re-create a new Adam and Eve from leftover genetic material. There's also a "metastory" concerning the identity of The Controllers—you know, Who exactly is that voice at the beginning of the show?

Outer Limits Online is designed to appeal to people who may be turned off by traditional computer games. In an effort to fight the common syndrome of veterans taking advantage of newbies, the game's design will attempt to lure experienced players away from the game's starting points. In fact, the writers say they're considering using "fake newbies" to trap vets preying on inexperienced players. There will also be a way for players to step out of their characters and chat with each other without destroying the game. (MGM Interactive; 800-646-5808; http://www.mgmua.com) *–Fredric Paul*

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scouting REPORT

Virtual Supercross (tentative title). The Windows 95–native Mortificator is a first-person shooter based on characters from the Mutant Chronicles role-playing universe. Powerslave, for Win 95 and DOS, is a first-person adventure in which you battle aliens invading an ancient Egyptian city. Finally, Virtual Supercross will offer a 3-D motorcycle-racing experience both in stadiums and on outdoor tracks. (Playmates Interactive Entertainment; 714-739-2912)

From Disc to Silver Screen

Interplay Productions, film production/talent agency Media-Four, and former teen actor and Return to Zork star Jason

Mindscape Sports Authority

You may think there are plenty of sports games on the market, but according to Mindscape senior vice president of entertainment Jim Fisher, "It's not as crowded as it seems." It's a big market, too. Sports games, says Fisher, account for up to 30 percent of total PC games sales—second only to action games. And sports games sales grew 41 percent last year.

This golf course exists only in your Mindscape.

Hoping to cash in, the company has created the Mindscape Sports Authority, a new CD-ROM and online brand scheduled to release baseball, football, basketball, and golf titles beginning this fall. While the company is banking on great graphics, easy playability, online links, and deep features to sell the new Windows 95 games, it's not shooting for the hot pro licenses.

Hammerin' Hank takes on The Babe in a brand-new baseball nostalgia-fest.

Aaron vs. Ruth Baseball will set the home run kings against each other in a barnstorming tour of Hall of Famers playing in nostalgic, old-style ballparks. The football and basketball games will be based on the college game, while the golf game will feature "real people" playing a 26-hole fantasy course in locations ranging from Stonehenge to Chicago skyscrapers. (Mindscape; 800-234-3088)

—Fredric Paul

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Iron Man is only one of the heroes in this new game (shown here on the Saturn).

Comics Crossover

Creating a small piece of computer game and comic book history, Acclaim's **Iron Man/X-O Manowar In Heavy Metal** marks the first time a game has mixed characters from two different comic companies. In Iron Man/X-O, armored action heroes from Marvel Comics and Acclaim Comics join forces to face their most dangerous enemies.

While preventing the bad guys from wielding the deadly Cosmic Cube, players will guide the good guys through forests, city streets, and other SGI-rendered environments, fighting more than 20 opponents in some 30 levels. Music will be provided by alternative rock band Filter, while a pair of crossover Iron Man/X-O comics will contain game tips and other info. The PC version of this sidescroller is due in late June. (Acclaim; 516-656-5000) —CC

More Marathon

Marathon: Infinity has more action than its Mac-only forebears.

In addition to bringing its popular Mac first-person shooter Marathon 2: Durandal to Windows 95, Chicago-based Bungie Software is readying Marathon: Infinity, a continuation of the Marathon world. Rather than being Marathon 3, the new game boosts graphics performance and explains anomalies in the first two games' storylines. Bungie is also tossing in Forge, a first-rate mapping tool for building new levels, and Anvil, which lets you design new monsters, environments, and physics. Look for both Marathons this summer. The company's next step is an as-yet-unnamed title that will place fighting-game action in a first-person, multilevel environment. (Bungie Software; 800-295-0066) ***–Donald St. John***

scouting REPORT

Hervey have formed a new company to make movies and TV shows based on games. Interplay Pictures will develop projects based on Interplay games as well as new and original content.

47 Fighting Mechs

Team 47 GoMan, originally conceived as a beat-'em-up fighting game, has been redesigned as a Mech-style game aimed at fans of MechWarrior 2 and its knock-offs. Created by 47-Tek, the game uses Japanese anime-style animation and can take advantage of Windows 95 DirectX technology to deliver better performance. (47-Tek; 415-495-4700; Win 95 CD)

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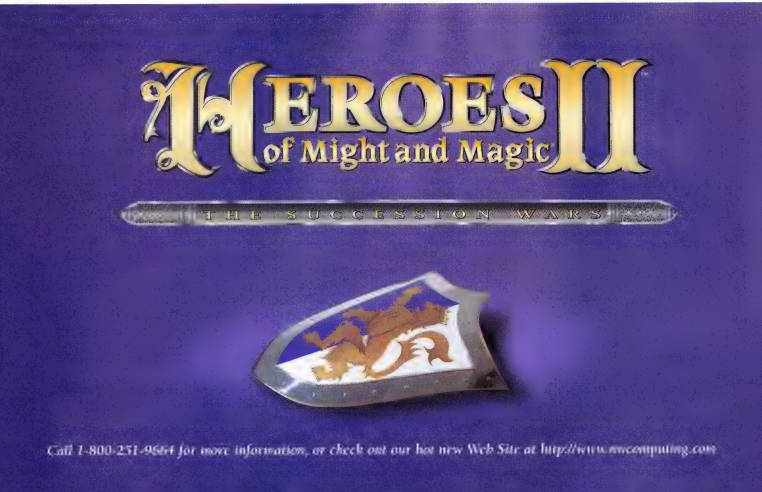
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Steve Klett

Where's the Manual?

When The Player's not actually playing a game on the weekends, he can occasionally be found sitting on his deck in the shade of a massive white pine, munching breakfast and reading the manual for a game he's going to play soon. Some games, you see, are so involved that instructions are a must-read.

So imagine my surprise one recent Saturday when I opened up Sierra On-Line's Silent Thunder: A-10 Attack 2. As hard as I looked in that big ol' box, I couldn't find a manual or documentation of any kind. What's up with that?

Turns out that all of Silent Thunder's game instructions are included on the game disc. I would have to chain myself to my desk and fire up my PC just to learn about the game, much less play it. Bummer.

Not to be thwarted, I sifted through a nearby pile of other Win 95 games, looking for a manual to read. When I ripped open the cavernous cardboard box to Sierra's EarthSiege 2, all I found was a lonely little CD-ROM; the only printed documentation was a card listing the game functions of the keyboard. Double bummer.

If game companies are going to eliminate printed docs, they should pass the savings along to us.

Starting to get worried, I checked New World Computing's Win 95 version of Heroes Of Might & Magic. I was heartened by the heft of this box; there had to be more than just a CD-ROM in this one. Turns out there was—a beautiful 96-page manual that included not just game information, but also some entertaining backstory material to set the mood. Hooray! I'd finally found some brain fodder to go with my morning breakfast—though my Cheerios had long since turned to mush.

Now, it may seem like I'm making a mountain out of a molehill here. You may even be glad there're fewer printed docs these days, as it means a few trees get to live a little longer. And those of you with big collections of games may wish that manuals could be squeezed into the CD-ROM jewel cases.

ILLUSTRATION BY MARCOS SORENSON

But for hard-core gamers such as myself, it's a big deal. Printed docs are nice not only because you can read them anywhere you'd like, getting some breathing space away from your PC in the process (which, trust me, gamers should get more of), but also because they're handy to keep nearby as you play. That way, when you reach a point in the game where you don't know how to do something or can't remember the key combination for the proper wingman commands, you can pause the game, look it up, and begin playing again, in almost no time at all.

Most online docs require you to pause the game, open an ugly text interface, search for what you want, close the interface, and then get back to the game. It's cumbersome, and a nuisance. Aren't games supposed to be fun?

Okay, I hear the smart alec in the back saying, "Why don't you just shut up and print out the damn docs yourself?" Well, the answer is simple: The Player doesn't own a printer, and he knows that many gamers don't have one either.

Game companies that don't include documentation (Sierra is just the largest example) may try to explain online-only guides as a convenience for gamers. Don't believe it.

The companies aren't cutting printed documentation out of concern for the consumer. They're doing it to save money. It costs a lot to print a 100-page manual, which in turn adds a hefty sum to shipping and distribution costs. But when I see the same $50–$60 price tag attached to those games in the stores, I have to ask, "What's in it for us?" If game companies are going to eliminate printed docs, they should pass some of their savings along to the consumer. Seems reasonable, doesn't it?

Well, don't hold your breath. Believe it or not, some company representatives actually believe that if vendors reduced the premium prices of their games, gamers would perceive them as being of lesser quality and wouldn't buy them. I don't think so.

A quick spin through the PC Games forums on America Online, for example, reveals many irked gamers complaining about games that come without documentation. (Silent Thunder draws particular ire, and some ticked-off posters say it will be the last Sierra game they will ever buy.)

But I've yet to see a posting from a gamer who was disappointed that games were costing less these days.

Tell The Player exactly what you think at sklett@iftw.com.

"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
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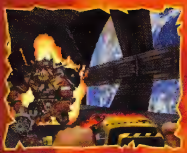

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Donald St. John

Going Back to Kali

Wirehead does just about everything there is to do on the Internet. Sometimes I feel like I'm living on the Net—they don't call them home pages for nothing, now, do they? But only recently could I start playing worthwhile games right on the Net itself, and I'd figured there were many cybermiles to go before that would be a regular thing for any of us. However, a little-heralded piece of shareware called Kali has forced me to advance the timetable.

Don't get me wrong—the Internet and games have been closely tied together for a while and will be even more so before long. Have I used the World Wide Web to download shareware games and demos? For quite a while now—years if you throw in the older commercial services and bulletin boards. Except for the first couple days of a hot download, that's the quickest way to get a hold of the newest, coolest stuff, not to mention lots of info on how to crack it. How about the commercial gaming services? Yep, they're all Internet-capable or about to be, from vets like the ImagiNation Network and MPG-Net to newbies like TEN and MPlayer.

But those are all ways to use the Net to get you *to* games, not ways to actually *play* games. Big difference. Think of it this way: It's the Holy Grail of online gaming to be able to piggyback your games on a relatively cheap, worldwide network with loads of bandwidth and a massive potential audience. That describes the Internet to a T, doesn't it? No manufacturing costs for thousands of CD-ROMs that may or may not ever sell (which is how shareware got started in the first place) and few infrastructure costs.

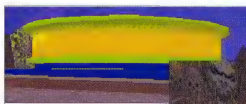
With Kali, you don't have to wait to begin playing action games on the Net.

But the Net's not considered fast enough to support action games, and the way it passes data traffic—in packets, not as a continual stream—is antithetical to fast-action gaming.

Worse, we all have come to expect seamless, well-rendered, responsive 3-D in all our games. Take it from me: The Net's 3-D methodology, VRML (Virtual Reality Markup Standard), is still a ways away from ever handling gaming environments. Hell, there isn't even a real standard yet; VRML pages designed for one piece of client software won't automatically work on another VRML client.

So, what you mostly see passing as Net games are slower, turn-based, story-type games, with frequently artful use of static graphics, sound, and occasional motion using the Shockwave browser plug-in that allows animation on a Web page. Wirehead has seen some creative examples of Net gaming that employs these methods, and I'll tell you about them in an upcoming *PC Games* feature.

But thanks to Kali, a shareware program from an ingenious fellow from Georgia named Jay Cotton, you don't have to wait to begin playing action games on the Net. Cotton is a heavy Doomer and the co-author of a widely used Doom Internet FAQ, and he got to wondering whether there was a way to take games that were set up for multiplayer contests under the IPX local-area networking protocol—which means most of 'em—and fool the Internet into transmitting them for multiplayer game play.



Even this finely rendered VRML scene is still a long way...

...from this dense 3-D full-motion Quake scene.

Lo and behold, Kali, his $20 gaming Internet client, has been out for about a year now. Kali allows multiplayer bouts with most of the games you're aiming to play—the Dooms, Quake, the Descents, the Warcrafts, Command & Conquer, Heretic and Hexen, Mortal Kombat 3, even Virtual Pool. Check it out at **http://www.axxis.com/kali/**.

I'd say Kali falls under the definition of "technical marvel," though you may not think so when you first struggle to configure the DOS client, even with the fairly lucid directions. (A Windows 95 beta that's a snap to load is also available, and there's even Kali for OS/2—but, as usual, no Mac yet.)

Of course, as Cotton cheerfully admits, a basic modem connection isn't quite good enough for the fastest games, such as Doom II, but at 28.8 you'll do pretty decently with most titles. There's even a great chat client thrown in to let you find a game partner.

The important thing is that Kali gets the basic job done, on a worldwide basis; if you want a Deathmatch anytime day or night, all you need to do is get the Kali software and log into a server from a list on the Web site. We gave it a whirl at 11 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time on an Australian server and watched an Aussie set up a Doom meeting with an American. Sounds like a little slice of gaming heaven, earlier than expected.

Send your opinions to Wirehead at dstjohn@iftw.com.

There is a place where mercy is not welcome.

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Who'd have thought a Web site could scare the hell out of you? id Software's comes close.

Great Gaming Sites

By Corey Cohen

PC Games sorts the treasure from the trash in game-related Internet sites. Come visit 25 of the best places to immerse yourself in computer games.

"THE WORLD WIDE WEB—oh, that's the place for online nerds. Just leave me alone and let me play some Duke."

If you actually agree with that statement, it's time to take your foot, swing it around, and kick yourself in the head. Hard. The Web, you see, is becoming an increasingly cool complement to computer games.

For one thing, you can find free demos of most of the latest games as much as several months before the complete versions reach the stores. (You won't find the really big 20MB-plus demos, though. For that, you need the PC Games CD-ROM.) And demos are only the beginning. Besides shareware and freeware, you can also find cheats, tips, pictures, news, and other game fans with whom to share information.

Of course, you'll want an experienced guide. You could try Internet search engines such as Alta Vista (www.altavista.digital.com), Infoseek (www.infoseek.com), and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), but if you don't know which address to choose out of the hundreds of suggestions, you'll end up wasting valuable game time sifting through the rejects.

That's where we come in. To help you make the most of your online time, we've sifted through hundreds of Web sites in search of the very best. Our exclusive collection of the top 25 gaming sites online will keep you headed in the right direction.

If you don't like typing in all the addresses, just point your Web browser to the *PC Games* site, **http://www.pcgamesmag.com**, for live links to all the sites mentioned. While you're there, you'll find archives of *PC Games* reviews (more than any other magazine), expanded versions of our game-intensive Guided Tours, a full section of strategies and cheats, and pointers to the hottest shareware offerings.

SEE *MORE* Online
http://www.pcgamesmag.com

Gamma Games Review has a captivating interface.

Enthusiast Sites and Online Mags

Wouldn't it be great to have your own virtual podium—a place where you can share gaming pics, facts, and opinions with the whole world? The Web is seething with sites created by hardcore gamers, and the best of them mix solid game-related material with unbridled enthusiasm.

Digital Nostalgia

www.umich.edu/~websspin/games/

No matter how flashy modern games get, you'll never be able to quash the simple charm of the golden oldies. Digital Nostalgia has 82 downloadable shareware games, divided into several different categories. Many of them are clones of arcade classics such as Defender, Joust, and Donkey Kong; others are ancient computer games that you can play by first downloading a software emulator. Been reminiscing about Karateka, Choplifter, or Archon? If so, you're in luck.

Douwe's Game Cheating Page

wwwdu.cs.utwente.nl/%7Eachterka/

Heads up, cheaters. Douwe Achterkamp is one determined gamecracker, and those of you who don't want to play by the rules will be truly pleased. The webmaster's own section, Douwe's On-Line Cheating Collection, contains cheats, solutions, hints, and walkthroughs for more than 150 games. The Cheating Page also offers access to several cheats libraries, a monthly newsletter dedicated to games, and several cheats and gaming links. What else do you want?

The Game Pen

www.gamepen.com

Billed as "The Online Community for Gamers," The Game Pen's a friendly, fact-filled place. This gaming digizine doesn't offer much in the way of visuals, but it's crammed full of news, reviews, downloads, and cheats. Now that it's merged with The Gamer's Ledge, a site known for its hundreds of megabytes of downloads, and GameWire, a site with product reviews and interviews, the Pen is an even better place to get a general update on the world of gaming.

Gamma Games Review

gamma.asucb.org:443

Game reviews and game reviews only. Using a multiframe setup similar to Queue's Adventures (see page 27), GGR gives you the text of a review in one window and a slide show of screen shots in another window. It's an effective presentation, and a refreshing change from scrolling downscreen to see more pictures.

Happy Napalm Software Home Page

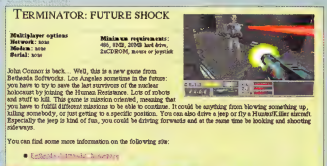
www.geopages.com/SiliconValley/2145

The place to turn for sheer gut-level enjoyment. The guys at Happy Napalm have created Doom Gore, a utility that adds bloody deaths to the hit game. They're also building new levels for Doom, Duke Nukem 3D, and Quake. Come by to download Doom Gore and read up on the progress of Happy's newest add-on, Duke Splatem 3D.

Hyper@ctive

hyperactive.com/

Need a good laugh? Check out this online-mag-with-an-attitude. Everything about Hyper@ctive is cutting-edge crass—from the button you hit to download game demos (TAKE A DUMP) to the racy humor in the reviews. (A typical example: "[In Ripper you play] a reporter who must follow the murderers' trail through the 'nether regions of cyberspace,' and hopefully, the nether regions of [your] female co-stars.") There's also news,


TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK
Multiplayer options:
Network: none
Modem: none
Serial: none
Minimum requirements:
486, 33MB, 256KB hard drive,
2xCDROM, mouse or joystick
John Connor is back. Well, this is a new game from Bethesda Softworks. Los Angeles scenarios in the future: you have to try to save the last survivors of the nuclear holocaust by training the Human Resistance. Lots of robots and stuff to kill. This game is mission oriented, meaning that you have to fulfill different missions to be able to continue. It could be anything from blowing something up, killing somebody, or just getting to a specific position. You can also drive a jeep (or fly a Hunter/Killer aircraft. Especially the jeep is kind of fun, you could be driving forwards and at the same time be looking and shooting sideways.
You can find some more information on the following site:
Bethesda Softworks

See the world of first-person shoot-'em-ups at The 3D Gaming Scene.

It's gore, gore, gore at Happy Napalm.

links, and features sections, plus a place where visitors can read or upload tips for recent games. The multiplatform focus limits the PC coverage a bit, but those of you who've got a 3DO, Mac, or another system will be thrilled.

Internet PC Games Charts

www.xs4all.nl/~jojo/pcgames.html

Look here for the results of two weekly polls. The first is the Commercial Top 100, a list of the best retail and registered shareware games in the world. The other is the Download Top 40, which covers demos, shareware, and freeware. Most of the games in the Top 100 contain links to cheats, editors, or other files in Happy Puppy, while each of the top 40 downloads is linked to somewhere where you can get it. The IPGC also features the results of earlier votes and a Top 100 of 1995 chart. Whether you're curious about what's selling or just want to root for your favorite game, the charts are interesting and fun.

King Link & Games

www.whitrock.com/kinglink

Lofty title, but it's well-deserved. King Link's got a ton of good gaming links, and he's more discriminating than many of the power sites. There are also business links, entertainment links, and chess links, plus a software section with more than 70 handy software tools for PC users, including a handy explanation of each category. Yet another bonus: a Web search area that lets you use one of dozens of different search engines to find your favorite game-related sites.

Queue's Adventures

www.thequeue.com

Queue's features a generous number of demos, reviews, previews, and links, plus cheats and news that haven't quite made it to the other sites. Navigating the site can be a bit tricky, and reading the text in the smaller frames isn't easy, but it's worth it.

The 3D Gaming Scene

www.pol.umu.se/html/ac/spel.htm

CyberMage. Dark Forces. Powerslave. Terra Nova. If it's 3-D and it's PC, chances are it's here. The 3D Gaming Scene is a great way to track the growing world of first-person action games (aka Doom clones). Each game is accompanied by a brief description and system requirements, and most of them have a sample screen shot and links to related Web sites. There's also a separate page that looks at Blood, Chasm, Prey, and other upcoming 3-D games. Stare at these images long enough and you'll see blood coming out of your screen.

Game-Specific Sites

Dying to know everything about Command & Conquer? How about Descent II, or Wing Commander IV? No problem. There are hundreds—possibly thousands—of other Web sites devoted to a single game or series. You can start with these worthy choices…

DAH--Duke Nukem 3D Pages

www.thend.com/dah/duke3d/index.html

There are sure to be hordes of Duke 3D pages in the coming months, but Demian Holmberg's is one of the first and one of the best. This nicely designed frame site holds a generous collection of screen shots, maps, utilities, and other Duke stuff. A huge player listing, organized by area code, lets you pair up with potential Dukematch victims, while a Visitor's Log shows you what everybody else is saying about 3D Realms' smoking new title.

Panic
Panic is a new mission of exactly levels for Descent II, with a new level available on Monday of each week! These are ten brand-new levels from the original Descent II level designers, created just for users to experience the Panic game.
Panic Level 1 Size - 188K
Panic Level 2 Size - 179K
Panic Level 3 Size - 215K
Panic Level 4 Size - 635K
Panic Level 5 Size - 418K
Panic Level 6 Size - 796K
Panic Level 7 Size - 2mK
Panic Level 8 Coming SOON
Panic Level 9 Coming SOON
Panic Level 10 Coming SOON
Panic Level 1-7 Enter Panic Mission To Date: Dec - 1015

Ratchlings: The Beginner's Guide to ICI's WarBirds

www.access.digex.net/~holland/

The place to go for WarBirds flight school. Hatchlings dispenses with sparkling graphics in favor of clear, comprehensive lessons in playing this complex multiplayer flight sim. Class begins with a description of the game, a page where you can download it, and tips for configuring it. After that the real training begins, covering everything from Takeoff to Landing to Stalls & Spins. Supplementary materials include a glossary of game-related terms and a monumental list of WarBirds, Air Warrior, and other aviation gaming sites. All in all, it's a complete introduction to a legendary flight sim.

The MechWarrior 2 High-Octane Info Page

www.clarku.edu/~rmohns/mw2/index2.html

The High-Octane Info Page is the perfect resource for diehard Mech warriors, and it's easy to navigate, too. Among the ever-growing contents are news on future releases (including the upcoming MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries expansion pack); a crack that lets you run the game without the CD; tips and cheats for playing the game; and a Q&A addressing frequent game questions. The site claims to have received over 155,000 hits, and when you see it, you'll know why.

An interactive strategy guide and more than 80 add-on levels make Totally Descent II a winner.

Mr. Doom

moose.erie.net/~mrdoom/index.html

Doom's not the newest game around, but with sites like Mr. Doom fanning the flames, the phenomenon just may last forever. Tom Sanner's great-looking Web site has nearly everything that relates to the classic action series: Doom WADs, utilities, and info; a list of modem players; a great links section; and a Rookie Page that answers beginners' Doom questions. For ex-Doomheads setting their sights on newer titles, a Quake page contains FAQs, patches, and more stuff.

Totally Descent II

www.hevanet.com/grimshaw/descent2.htm

With an interactive strategy guide, a downloadable demo, cheat codes, and more than 80 add-on levels, Totally Descent II is just, well, totally awesome. The gorgeous design evokes the game's in-your-face 3-D graphics, and you can even listen to sounds from the game while browsing links or downloading files.

Hail to the king, baby. DAH is one of the more enthusiastic Duke sites.

GREAT GAMING SITES

Company Sites

Just about every computer game developer, distributor, or market has a Web site. Most are lame excuses for hyping second-rate products, but the best company sites do more than promote a catalog of games: They provide a true feel for the gaming experience—a sample of things to come.

Burn:Cycle's Web site is better than the game.

Activision

www.activision.com

For a good idea of what company sites are capable of, check out activision.com. The basic contents—things like company history, customer support, game list—are all fairly standard, and no better than those in many business sites. What really distinguishes Activision's home on the Web are its interactive promotions of the company's newest games. With Spycraft: The Great Game, you can join the Web Intelligence Agency (WIA) while you listen to an audio/visual case briefing and sample many of the gadgets used in the game. The area for Zork: Nemesis lets you try your hand at puzzles much like those in the actual adventure game. Pretty cool.

Activision is a master of online game promotion.

Just one of the many scary scenes at id's Web site.

Burn:Cycle/Philips Media

www.burncycle.com

Whether or not you liked Burn:Cycle, you'll want to see the way Philips and site developer Digital Planet turned this burned-out game into one hell of a Web site. burncycle.com gives you a true taste of the game by letting you participate in one of nine interactive episodes, complete with beautifully rendered animation and multiple endings. If that's not enough, you can watch a trailer for the game, download QuickTime movies, get product info, and enter London Underground to meet the game's creators. Whew!

id Software

www.idsoftware.com

Like Happy Napalm (see page 26), this one's kind of a guilty pleasure. The site's game-related information is good but not great: descriptions and screen shots of the Doom series, Quake, Hexen, and other titles; a Deathmatch Maker; links to Tech Support; and company news. What makes it worth seeing is the captivating imagery used as backdrops for the various sections. A severed arm gives way to a flaming skull, each linked to a tapestry of screaming faces. Way to set the mood, id.

Looking Glass Technologies

www.lglass.com

A warning: If you don't like high-intensity combat sims, stay away, because one look at this Web site will make you want to race to the store and nab Terra Nova immediately. Looking Glass does a fine job of showing off its new game (distributed by Virgin Interactive) with this online tour of the game's interfaces, equipment, and more. Click through the 70-plus pages of pictures and descriptions, then download a demo and a movie of Terra Nova's opening cut scene. Finish off with a look at some screens and sounds from Flight Unlimited, the company's great-looking flight sim.

The Cyberia games meet at xatrix.com.

LucasArts

www.lucasarts.com

Reasons we didn't pick this site: we love Full Throttle, we drool over Dark Forces, and we're waiting feverishly for X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter. So what makes LucasArts' home page so great? Organization. For a fairly dense site, it's extremely easy to navigate. You'll have no problem exploring The Adventurer, an online news magazine for LucasArts; the Company Store, a catalog of over 100 different games and game products; The Press Room; Demos and Screens for Lucas games; a Recruitment Center; and a Technical Support Department, which includes dozens of solutions for problems running the company's various games. A great introduction to a gaming giant.

Xatrix

www.xatrix.com

With its stylish, tech-noir construction, www.xatrix definitely has the futuristic look down pat. But what really distinguishes this site is its clever idea of serving as a link between Xatrix's two existing titles, Cyberia and Cyberia^2. By reading a futuristic newspaper, conducting further research, and e-mailing Zak (the games' main character), you can find out where he's located as Cyberia^2 begins. In this way, the site becomes part of the whole gameplaying experience, giving you a firsthand look at the games' unique milieu. You can also download game demos, movies, and files from both games.

Revenge can ruin a perfectly good roadtrip.
Interstate '76
Auto Combat Arrives in Showrooms This Fall
ACTIVISION
http://www.activision.com
© 1998 Activision, Inc. All rights reserved.

Power Sites

When other places leave you wanting more, you may want to check out what we call "power sites"—those places whose content is so extensive that it distinguishes them from the rest of the crowd.

Games Domain

www.gamesdomain.com

It seems like almost every gaming page you'll find has a link to Games Domain, and after you've seen it, you'll know why. Designed to be "a central reference point for all things games-related on the Internet," the Domain is amazingly comprehensive. Thanks to the low number of images, you'll have no problem quickly accessing a number of extensive sections, including Games Information; Games Programming; Direct Download; Freebies, Competitions & Promotions; and The Games Domain Review, a multiplatform gaming 'zine covering various titles and events.

Happy Puppy

www.happypuppy.com

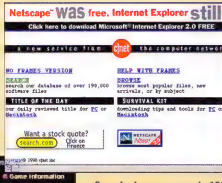
Whether or not it's "The #1 Games Site on the Internet," Happy Puppy has a lot going for it. Though it's a bit more colorful than Games Domain, the site pretty much dispenses with snazzy graphics or animation pizzazz in favor of a denser approach. It works: There's something here for virtually everyone. Download some of the best new games in the New PC Demos and Shareware section. To see listings of game tips, explore Lord Soth's PC Game and Cheats. If you like flight sims, check out the flight-sim forum. And there's much more.

You'll find links, downloads, contests, and more at Games Domain.

Jumbo!

www.jumbo.com

Can you say H-U-G-E? Jumbo! holds 49,446 shareware and freeware programs, and while the vast majority of those aren't games, you'll find plenty of arcade games, RPGs, sports games, trivia games, war games…the list goes on.



Search shareware.com's 190,000 files for your favorite shareware games.

shareware.com

www.shareware.com

Surprise—with 190,000 software files, clnet's shareware.com makes Jumbo! seem puny. Using this site's Virtual Software Library search engine, you can search for, browse, and download freeware, shareware, demos, fixes, patches, and upgrades. According to clnet, 10 to 20 percent of shareware.com's files are game-related. If you're interested in shareware games, here's the place to find them. ■

More Game-Specific Web Sites

Civilization II
www.sn.no/%7Egislehe/civ.htm (Gisle's Civilization Page): a tour through a sample game—and one gamer's challenge
www.microprose.com/civII/index.html (MicroProse's official page): screenshots, news, and links

Command & Conquer
www.mcln.net/lc2/index.html (The Ultimate Command & Conquer File Collection): just what the name says
www.econ.cbs.dk/people/dszcpfk/cctemple.html (Temple of the Conqueror): hints, news, multiplayer matching, and more

Descent II
www.tc.umn.edu/nthome/g129/olbx006/d2.html (Vampyre's Descent II Secrets and Baddies): a visual guide to the game
www.interplay.com/website/descent2.html (The Official Interplay Descent II page): movie trailer, interactive preview, and game news

Doom series
doomgate.cs.buffalo.edu/ (DoomGate): another key source for all kinds of Doom files

Duke Nukem 3D
www.3drealms.com (3D Realms' Official Duke 3D Site): info and more from the gamemaker
ccwf.cc.utexas.edu/%7Ewkeer/ROTT.index.html (The Unofficial Duke Nukem 3D Page): tons and tons of stuff relating to the game

Marathon 2
www.amug.org/~marathon/sirpee/marathon2/index.html (Welcome to the Marathon 2 Web): news, maps, saved games, and more for this soon-to-be-PC Mac-tion hit

NBA Live '96
www-users.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/%7Etimt/nba96.html (Tim Tschimer's NBA Live '96 Page): tips, links, patches, and editors
www.ozemail.com.au/%7Elmprod/nbalive96 (The Original NBA Live '96 Page): patches, reviews, players' stories, cheats

Police Quest—SWAT
www.footnet.com/swat/ (Police Quest V—SWAT Main Page): detailed hints and an overview of the game

Quake
www.nucnet.org/aftershock/ (Aftershock…where Quake awakes): a Webzine containing files, game description, a forum, and more
www.stomped.com (The Quake Stomping Grounds): news, screenshots, links, and more

Warcraft II
wellington.org/~gulnn/war2.html (The Warcraft II Resource Center): cheats, maps, strategy, Internet play, and a survey
www.ualberta.ca/%7Ewlssang/war2/war2.html (RYYT's Unofficial Warcraft II Page): lots of links, some description of the game

Wing Commander IV
acm.vt.edu/~bryant/underground/index.html (Terran Confederate Underground): good links, great descriptions of the entire Wing Commander series

To find more game-specific sites, try searching for the game you want using the search engines mentioned in the main story. Also, most distributors/developers have sites containing information about their games, including links to other sites covering these games. —CC

Species are disappearing all over the UNIVERSE.

No one is safe...

You will be next!

"...revolutionary game design. It may indeed knock fighting fans into another universe of apocalyptic action." — Strategy Plus

- By far, the largest, most detailed foes ever seen in a fighting game. Up to 3/4 of the screen's height.
- Innovative screen panning, zooming, real-time scaling, shadows, and special FX.
- Interactive, animated, and detailed backgrounds that often hide special dangers.
- 8 characters, 2 champions and a nasty surprise.
- Special moves, combos, resurrections, & humiliations.
- Blood sucking, claw slashing, tail whipping, karate kicking, fist ramming, body slamming, blood spurting action — need we say more?

XENOPHAGE

Alien Bloodsport

FormGen INCORPORATED

Developed by Argo Games
Published by Apogee Software, Ltd.
Distributed by FormGen

ARGO GAMES

Software Creations Web BBS (http://www.swbbs.com)
WWW Site (http://www.apogee1.com)
CIS (Go APOGEE) AOL (Keyword APOGEE)

APOGEE

Welcome to 9

Ever wonder what it'd feel like to walk around inside a Salvador Dali painting? Well, it'd be a little like playing 9, the stunning new adventure game developed by Robert De Niro's Tribeca Interactive and published by GT Interactive. Due in stores this summer, 9 is a funky mix of artistic styles inspired by the music and lyrics of rock megastars Aerosmith. It looks nothing like your typical adventure game. Forget the computer-rendered backgrounds, video characters, incongruous puzzles, and endless inventories you're used to.

Tribeca's game debut is something completely different. In fact, the game achieves its distinct painterly look because it actually is a painting—make that a composite of 900 acrylic works by artist Mark Ryden. (For a look at how the game evolved from paper sketch to high-res glory, see "Graphic Matters," page 34). The acrylics depict all but one of the game's 14 rooms and its 13 offbeat characters, including the half-man/half-airplane help-agent Salty and Isadora, the game's resident spiritual advisor.

To get past the Giant Tiki Drum God, you must master his rhythms—kind of like a percussive Simon.

Inside the Last Resort's Tapestry Room, you'll meet Aura, the voice muse. Better keep your eyes on that eye; better yet, control what you see.

Video actors are nowhere in sight, because 9 co-producer Buzz Hays felt that fantasy characters would make the game more flexible and interesting. On the other hand, the game is bursting with celebrity voice talent: James Belushi as Salty, Cher as Isadora, and Christopher Reeve and Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry as some of the other offbeat characters. Despite the presence of some of the biggest names ever associated with a computer game, Tribeca isn't exploiting the connection. As Hays puts it, "This isn't a game starring Cher; it's a game with an ensemble of familiar voices."

More important than big-name actors is compelling, scalable game play. To help less-experienced players, Salty keeps track of your progress and offers hints—ranging from obtuse to increasingly specific—if you get stumped. Tribeca also worked to make 9's 50-plus puzzles fit logically into the game's storyline, so that puzzles later in the game require knowledge acquired earlier on. The puzzles are randomly generated, too, so if you return to the same spot, you'll meet a different challenge. And they keep getting harder the longer you play.

What also sets 9 apart from the adventure-game pack is its minimalist interface. You play the game from a first-person perspective, moving around the screen simply by pointing and clicking. You'll always find a single point of reference—a vase on a table, for instance—in view, so that no matter where you are in a room, you can easily get your bearings. Likewise, you don't have to be in a specific spot to make things work. You can activate a puzzle from anywhere in the room, as long as you can see it.

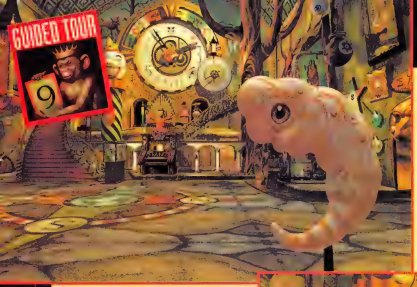
When there's something for you to pick up and examine, the cursor changes to a hand icon. But you can't stash objects in an inventory. The game lets you carry only one item at a time, and that item is always available for use. While veteran adventurers may miss having an inventory, 9's design adds a strategy element: you must remember the location of potentially useful objects and make judgments about which are most important. Meanwhile, look out for the evil Toxic Twins—they just might snag something you decided to leave behind.

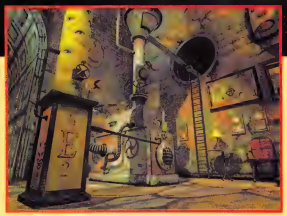
Tribeca Interactive's

Want to know more? We've got your number. *PC Games*' exclusive Guided Tour will introduce you to some of 9's strange rooms and offbeat characters. Look for a demo of the game on next month's *PC Games* CD-ROM. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847)

By Christine Grech

9
visual feast of an adventure game



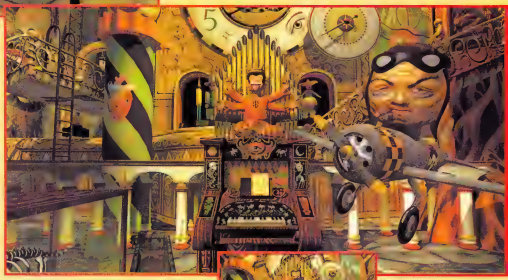


Your first challenge is to get this darn thing lit. For that, you need the fuel valve.

The Lobby is the heart of 9. Here's where you begin the game and meet up with the likes of Salty and Isadora.

PLAYING THE GAME...

As the main character of 9, you've been summoned by your uncle, Thurston Last, to help save his rundown resort. Once, artists gathered at the Last Resort to rejuvenate their creative inspirations with the help of its mighty Muse Machine. Now Uncle Last has been forced to dismantle the Muse Machine because the evil Toxic Twins have escaped from it. It's up to you to find the resort's nine forgotten muses and get their help containing the Toxic Twins and restoring the Muse Machine.



Salty may not be that friendly at first, but give him a chance to warm up to you. Eventually, he'll provide valuable assistance.

Isadora is the first of nine muses you'll encounter. She'll give you clues—for a price. To earn the antique coins she covets, check out that old boiler.

Good thing you got the organ working; you'll be returning here again and again throughout the game to piece together your clues and make some beautiful music.

The Lobby, the heart of 9, was conceived in a sketch by Mark Ryden.

This line-art drawing of the Lobby shows the hidden-line rendering of the same picture.

Here's the Lobby in a flat-shaded computer rendering.

The final image of the Lobby, combining the rendering with textures and lighting effects.

Gee, I wonder why they call this the Dali Room? If you play your cards right, you just might get to meet a curvaceous guitar named Lucille.

Earn some musical notation by navigating the ball through the various paddles. You might want to think things through first, and remember: Stay ahead of gravity.

A memento from the Last Resort's glory days. Can you find the nine forgotten muses and get them to help you restore the Muse Machine?

The Garage is the only computer-rendered room in 9. To get through here, you'd better be good at slot-car racing.

Graphic Matters

When you play 9, you enter a stimulating world of rich interiors, constant motion, unusual camera angles, and blur-frame animation borrowed from the movies. Here's a little of what went into creating the game's unique visual style, which Tribeca began creating in February of last year.

The game is designed on a hexagonal grid, with 18 key-frames per location. It began life as a series of sketches by art director Mark Ryden, best known for his work on album covers for Aerosmith, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Michael Jackson, and other famous artists. Next, Tribeca created computer-generated wireframes of the Last Resort's fanciful environments. But when it came to the actual graphics themselves, the company eschewed computers in favor of hand-painted acrylic textures and objects, primarily to avoid extremely long rendering times. For Hays and the rest of the development team, showcasing technology was less important than using the techniques that made the most sense for 9's organic environment.

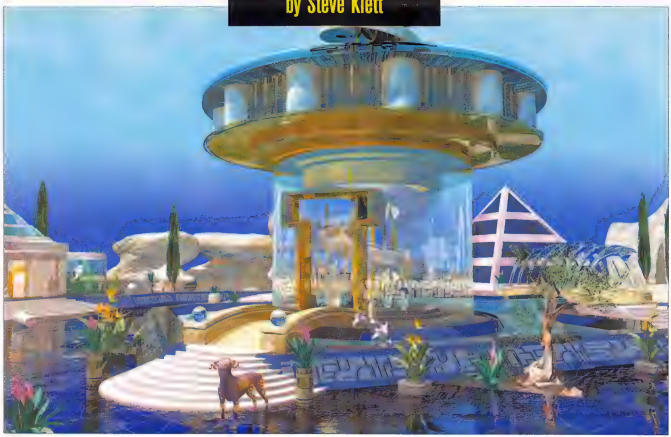
The group found they could use fewer pieces of geometry in the complex environments by painting many of the subtle lighting effects on a flat surface, then scanning these 2-D images onto wireframes and stretching and wrapping to meet their particular needs. For example, Ryden found he could paint a wall texture in 15 minutes, something that might take hours to render on a computer.

Tribeca used these techniques throughout the game, with one notable exception: the Garage. Hays and company used computer-generated graphics here because they felt it fit the room's high-tech personality of chrome and shine. They also wanted to show any doubters that Tribeca wasn't afraid to take a high-tech approach. —CG

TIMELAPSE

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

by Steve Klett



In their haste to ride the coattails of a hit, most clones of popular games aim no higher than to approach the quality of the original. Once in a while, though, a game comes along that tries to do more, and, in the process, sets a new standard.

Few games have enjoyed as long a reign as the best of class as Myst, Brøderbund's first-person adventure game that has sold more than 2 million copies since its 1993 debut. That kind of success makes a tempting target,

Myst killer? Take a stunningly beautiful trip back in time and decide for yourself.

of course, and several companies are prepping self-proclaimed "Myst killers" for release this fall. There's Sierra On-Line's Lighthouse, for example, and Rocket Science's Obsidian. But the game that looks to be Myst's strongest challenger is Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations from GTE Entertainment. Unwilling to wait until the game ships in October, *PC Games* visited GTE in Carlsbad, Calif., for a behind-the-scenes preview of Timelapse.

What we saw stunned even us jaded edi-

The good Professor has been trapped in a timegate, and it's up to you to free him.

torial types. A good deal of Myst's success was due to its groundbreaking graphics, which simply wowed adventure gamers, and Timelapse delivers a visual feast of similar proportions. The game features SGI-rendered, full-screen (640-by-480), high-resolution, photorealistic graphics with dynamic ray-tracing effects that allow for incredible light and shadow. Simply put, Timelapse's graphics do to Myst what Duke Nukem 3D has done to Doom—make it seem run of the mill. (It's about time, since both Doom and Myst are more than 2 years old.)

Like Myst, you'll point-and-click your way through the game one step at a time. Yet, unlike Myst, Timelapse also features cool 360-degree panning effects (*a la* Zork Nemesis) that give the game even more whiz-bang appeal.

Of course, anyone who's ever collected an inventory knows a good adventure game needs more than stellar graphics. Though we won't know for sure until we play the full version, Timelapse seems to have the story and puzzle angles covered as well.

The basic storyline begins with the disappearance of archaeology professor Alexander Nichols while trying to find a link between the ancient civilizations of the Egyptians, Mayans, Anasazi, Easter Island, and the fabled lost city of Atlantis.

You, of course, must find out what happened to him, and uncover the mysterious alien "link" for which the professor was searching. To succeed, you will have to travel to the aforementioned civilizations, solve myriad indigenous puzzles, and find the keys that will allow you to enter Atlantis and discover the meaning of life. (Well, maybe not that last part. But I can't give away the ending before the game comes out, can I?)

To aid you in your quest you'll have the professor's travel journal and instant camera, which lets you take snapshots of things you see that might help you solve a puzzle later (no more note-taking!). And you'd better like solving puzzles, because Timelapse boasts more than its share, in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and flavors: logical, intuitive, spatial, mechanical, musical, and so on.

The game's designers are making every effort to ensure that these puzzles fit logically into the overall flow of the game. In a nice touch, each puzzle will relate to the culture and time period in which it's located. Don't worry if you slept through history class—subtle in-game hints abound, and there's always the professor's journal, which is full of crucial information and clues.

Unlike Myst, Timelapse is nonlinear. You can travel to the various worlds in any order you choose, though Atlantis remains your final destination. Better yet, the game has multiple endings based on what you do in Atlantis, including the possibility of death. (Fortunately, you can save games.)

To check out some of the many wonders Timelapse holds on its three CDs, hop aboard our exclusive Guided Tour into the past. (GTE Entertainment; 800-483-8632, $59.99)

PLAY *the Demo on the disc*

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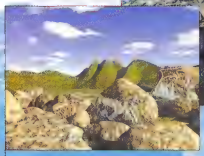
Easter Island

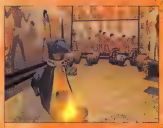
These giant Easter Island Moai statues hold valuable clues to later puzzles—if you've got an observant eye.



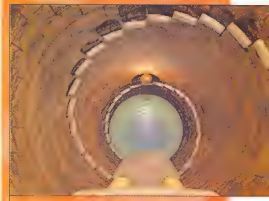
This is the landing point on Easter Island where the game begins. Time to start sleuthing!

Egypt

A different perspective: Explore everything meticulously or you may miss some impressive sights (and clues), such as these temple carvings at the end of "Obelisk Avenue," which is behind the Dock Temple.



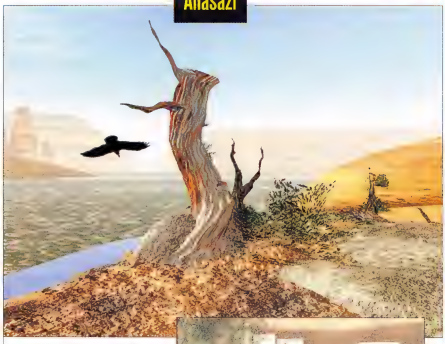
Look carefully and you'll find several puzzle clues inside this unassuming side room in the Dock Temple.



You can't solve the stair puzzle in the well until you've found the secret crystal. Once you have it (no, we won't tell you where it is), drop it into the water to make the stairs appear.

Every Egyptian wall tells a story—if you know how to read petroglyphs.

Anasazi



Here's where you arrive in the Anasazi world. The crow will fly away toward the river below. Perhaps you should follow it...

You can enter these Anasazi dwellings to find additional game clues and get a feel for how these fascinating people lived.

The glyph puzzle is located near Sunwatcher's Rock. Solve it and you'll uncover a secret passageway.

Mayan World

Chameleon color puzzle: You must match the shades of the chameleon as it changes colors to gain entrance to the door behind it.

Beyond the bones of sacrificed ancients (or careless explorers, perhaps) lies the entrance to the fetid Mayan jungle.

If you haven't figured it out already, the Mayans were heavily into human sacrifices.

Solve the Jaguar Temple Sacrifice puzzle to gain entrance to the Mayan World Timegate. (If you're getting a feeling of déjà vu, you may have seen a similar puzzle in Buried in Time.)

Note the intricate detail and lighting effects inside this Mayan temple.

Climb to the top of the El Castillo pyramid for a spectacular view of the Mayan plaza below.

Atlantis

The main operations center in Atlantis; its heart, so to speak.

You've found it—the lost city of Atlantis! Check out the smooth textures and reflections.

Before you're done, you'll have it out with the Guardian, a malfunctioning robot designed to watch over Atlantis' denizens.

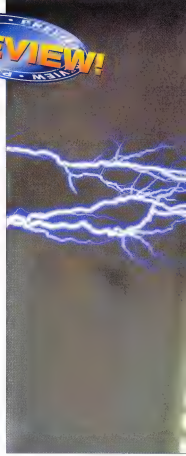
Video kiosks scattered throughout the game hold puzzle clues, as well as valuable information on Timelapse's backstory.

Scarier. Sexier. Bloodier. Better?

PREVIEW!

Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh

By Steve Klett



Whether you liked Phantasmagoria or hated it—there seemed to be little middle ground—you'd have to agree that Sierra's horror adventure game broke new ground when it debuted last summer.

Not only did it fill a staggering seven CD-ROMs, but it featured stunning computer-generated backgrounds with some of the smoothest video-based characters ever seen in a computer game. In addition, its classic gothic storyline was far more sophisticated than that of your average adventure game.

While few could complain about the game's technical merits (except that the main character wore the same clothes throughout the game's weeklong time period), gameplay was surprisingly short and easy, and not scary enough.

Sierra is hoping to fix these problems with the second title in the Phantasmagoria series, A Puzzle of Flesh. *PC Games* hopped a puddle-jumper up to rainy Seattle to get the exclusive lowdown from the game's designer, Lorelei Shannon.

Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: October

The first thing we learned was that A Puzzle of Flesh is not a sequel, but a brand-new game with a new story and new characters. "Think of it more as an episode of *Tales From the Crypt*—another episode in a scary series," says Shannon.

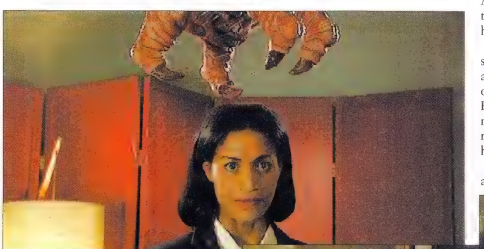
Scarier, Creepier, And Bloodier

Shannon, who wrote A Puzzle of Flesh's story (and, ironically, has authored some children's games in addition to horror stories), promises that A Puzzle of Flesh will be scarier, creepier, and bloodier than its forebear. "It will be a lot more psychologically frightening," she says. "The first one was almost a tribute to 1960s horror—you know, a possessed husband in a big haunted house." Sierra is billing A Puzzle of Flesh as a "psychological horror story of madness, murder, and the blackest depths of the human soul."

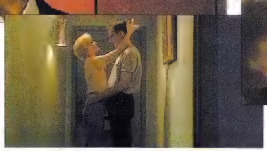
Players assume the role of Curtis Craig, a quiet, seemingly normal young man with a steady job and a steady girlfriend. (We'll all miss the attractive Victoria Morsell, who played Adrienne in the original.) Curtis has spent some time in a mental hospital, but that's all behind him now. He just wants a normal, happy life.

Don't count on it. Before long, rats start speaking to him, photographs appear to bleed, and his computer develops a vicious mind of its own. When a mysterious evil being called the Hecatomb appears to Curtis, evoking his tormented childhood, his darkest fears, and his most painful memories, he begins to doubt both his sanity and reality itself.

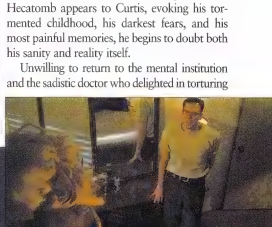
Unwilling to return to the mental institution and the sadistic doctor who delighted in torturing



Horrible visions, such as this claw that looks like it's about to have Detective Allie for lunch, aren't just reserved for Curtis' dreams.



Curtis and his girlfriend, Jocilyn, enjoy a quiet moment in one of the game's few warm-fuzzy scenes.



Curtis' mother hanged herself when he was a small boy. As you can see, her death still haunts him.

Sierra hopes A Puzzle of Flesh's ending is as shocking as its special effects.

With the help of his friend Trevor, Curtis investigates his family history in hopes of discovering the source of his mental troubles.

him, Curtis enlists his best friend Trevor in an attempt to understand what's happening.

As Curtis delves into his family history, he unearths more questions than answers, and finds some ugly family secrets. His mother abused him relentlessly when he was a small child, and eventually hanged herself. Immediately afterward, his father died in a strange, brutal accident that was never explained. Curtis begins to suspect that the pharmaceutical firm he works for, WynTech, is behind everything.

Meanwhile, Curtis continues to be plagued by visions and the Hecatomb. He grows distant from his girlfriend, and is seduced by Therese, a co-worker with a hankering for downtown S&M clubs. Before long, murders—incredibly brutal murders—start to happen, and Curtis is fingered as the prime suspect.

Desperate and pursued by madness, Curtis explores the bowels of WynTech, where he discovers another world and a bizarre secret (which, of course, we're not going to reveal).

According to Shannon, the biggest twist is that players won't know until the very end of the game whether they're the ones committing the murders. "It's really very disturbing, [and] when you're done playing, you're going to be left saying, 'Ewwwwwwwy,'" says Shannon.

All Video, All the Time

The intriguing story certainly sounds ripe with potential for surprises and frightening moments. But the big question is, "What's the gameplay like?"

Well, it's going to be different. The first thing Phantasmagoria fans will notice is that the original's computer-rendered artwork is gone. A Puzzle of Flesh is shot entirely in video, using real sets and real actors. That's right—except for the last scene, which is computer-rendered, it's an all-video game. That's a development sure to raise doubts in the minds of gamers wary of virtually unplayable all-video games such as Johnny Mnemonic and Fox Hunt.

Shooting was still in progress when we visited the set in April, so we couldn't actually play anything. Sierra seems very aware of the playability issues surrounding all-video games, and seems to be making every effort to ensure a quality playing experience. "A Puzzle of Flesh is a story-driven game," says Shannon, "but above all, it's a game, not a movie. The majority of video-based games have been built around a movie; this one is being built around a script with real sets, which should help a lot."

Puzzles and Inventories

So should the emphasis on puzzles, which should be clear from the name alone. The game's 200-page script is riddled with puzzles that Sierra hopes will present more of a challenge to gamers than those in the original Phantasmagoria. While difficult, the new puzzles will be as logical as possible given the bizarre storyline.

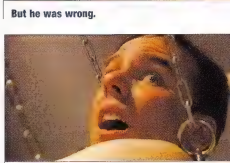
A Puzzle of Flesh will feature a classic adventure-game inventory system in which you'll carry around the items you find until you've used them in the proper place and time. In order to open a bolted toolbox, for instance, you'll need to find a hammer and chisel first. Once you use them, the hammer and chisel will be gone from your inventory.

The conversation scheme is also based on your inventory. You grab an item from your inventory, click on a character to bring up the subject, and then listen to what the character has to say. (The game automatically records every conversation, so you can listen to them as many times as you like.)

The game's interface will be mouse-driven and shown mostly through a third-person perspective, which lends the game a voyeuristic atmosphere. To go somewhere or open something, you just click and it's done. No more endlessly walking back and forth to revisit important locales, an unfortunate hallmark of many of Sierra's classic adventure games. You'll be able to click through movies if you want, but Shannon cautions against doing this the first time through, as there will

Curtis thought Therese looked like the nice, all-American girl next door.

But he was wrong.



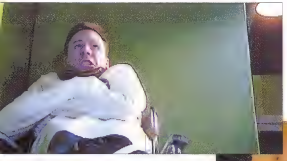
Looks like poor Curtis has bitten off more than he can chew...

The Hecatomb has many frightening forms. Here he plays a character from his favorite movie, *Night of the Living Dead*.

be few "throwaway scenes."

You'll also be able to save at any point in the game, and there will be multiple save slots as well. You won't encounter the possibility of death until the final stages of the game, and when you do die (and you *will*), you'll have the option of restarting at your last save or right before your death.

Even though A Puzzle of Flesh will ship on only five or six CDs, it should last far longer than Phantasmagoria. Many experienced adventure gamers finished the original game in as few as 8 to 10 hours, meaning there wasn't much bang for the buck. Shannon estimates A Puzzle of Flesh will take a minimum of 20 to 25 hours to complete, which she hopes is an acceptable compromise. "I don't think hard-core players will be totally happy with this game either," she acknowledges, "but it's definitely going to be harder than the first."



Is Curtis really crazy? Does he belong in a straitjacket? You'll have to play the game to find out.

And it's a home run!

Controversial Content

When Phantasmagoria first came out, its adult content generated quite a stir. (In fact, it's a testament to the game's popularity that after being banned by stores such as Wal-Mart, it still managed to sell more than 300,000 copies.) The original included a fairly innocent love-making scene with partial nudity, as well as a disturbing scene in which the main character was raped by a demon.

Even so, there wasn't as much adult-themed material as the game's title and hype suggested. That shouldn't be a problem this time around. Dismemberment, exploding heads, cleavers, bondage, good old-fashioned sex—they're all there, in spades. Shannon is quick to note, however, that there is no sexual violence in the new game. "There's quite a bit of sex and quite a bit of violence, but they never match up," she says.

Despite a healthy helping of blood, the game's violence remains somewhat muted, just as it was in the original game. The camera doesn't linger on the gore; you'll get a quick, shocking glimpse of murders as they happen, and then it's on to the next scene.

The sexual situations are the same way. During our visit, we viewed one of the sex scenes, a tasteful tryst between Curtis and his girlfriend, Jocilyn (played by Monique Parent, who will be featured this summer in *Playboy*'s Rising Stars video). It's R-rated material, nothing more. Nevertheless, despite a parental toggle that censors most of the suggestive content, Shannon recommends that kids under the age of 17 not play the game.

A Promising Puzzle

A Puzzle Of Flesh looks to have all the right ingredients to be an entertaining, challenging, and sufficiently twisted experience for adventure gamers with a love for a good horror story. It's hard to forget, though, that the majority of all-video games have looked good while in production, then failed dismally when actually released. We won't know for sure if this is one that will make the difficult formula work until the game hits store shelves in October. But we're looking forward to finding out.

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Not for the politically correct

Duke Nukem 3D

By Steve Klett

Damn. Ever since those aliens got here, all sushi bars offer are powerups and human body parts!

One shrunk, one to go. Then it's time to do some stomping.

When the action cools down, Duke looks for other means of entertainment.

I can't recall an event that was as eagerly anticipated among the *PC Games* staff as the arrival of the full version of Duke Nukem 3D.

The shareware release of this hot first-person action game, which includes just the first six levels of the game, had been sucking up all of our free time (and then some) since it came out in February. The prospect of 22 brand-spanking new levels—ripe with multiplayer possibilities, new weapons, and new secrets to discover—had us all champing at the bit.

Thankfully, the full version actually lives up to our lofty expectations.

Developed by 3D Realms, Duke Nukem 3D couples high-res graphics (up to 800-by-600) with fast, fluid gameplay. While not true 3-D—game characters and enemies are rendered two-dimensionally, for instance—Duke Nukem is perhaps the most 3-D first-person shooter available. It features rooms on top of rooms and the ability to fight enemies above, in front, behind, and below you at the same time.

The game's story is as flat as the characters, serving only to set the stage for the fully fleshed-out combat. Murderous aliens have landed in a futuristic Los Angeles and are stealing Earth women to use as breeding stock back on their home planet. Duke Nukem, who is equal parts Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Jean-Claude Van Damme, sets out to stop them. It's a B-movie plot, but Duke makes up for its literary shortfalls with cleverly designed levels, some intriguing weaponry, and fast and furious gameplay.

The game divides its 28 levels into three episodes: L.A. Meltdown (the shareware version), Lunar Apocalypse, and Shrapnel City. You start out on Earth, travel to a massive base orbiting the moon, and return to Earth for the finale. Of course, the game supports network play for up to eight players, and head-to-head play via modem or serial cable, for both deathmatches and cooperative play.

Like most Doom clones, you've got an arsenal of weapons (10) to help increase your odds for survival. These include such staples as the Shotgun, Chaingun Cannon, RPG, and trusty pistol, but the Pipebombs (remote-activated grenades, if you will), Shrinker, and Freezethrower steal the show. As its name suggests, the Shrinker reduces enemies down to doll-size for Duke to squish under his boot. The Freezethrower turns enemies into ice sculptures for Duke to shatter with his boot or a weapon. As you can see, Duke doesn't just like to kill his enemies, he enjoys humiliating them. (For more on Duke's weapons and how to use them, see our Strategy & Tactics section, page 80.)

Duke Nukem 3D
FormGen
800-367-6436

Developer: 3D Realms
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, VGA
List Price: $39.99

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A

King of the first-person action shooters—at least for the moment.

Save Our Screens

If you can't get enough of Duke, FormGen also makes a Duke Nukem screen saver. Its five modules, including Body Parts and Desktop Rampage, let your computer display various images from the game while you're not using it. The $24.95 package also includes 75 wallpaper images, 16 jigsaw puzzles, 25 sound clips, and 16 MIDI-format music tracks.

The pipebomb is one of the most devious weapons. Here Duke uses one to make scrambled aliens for breakfast.

As with Doom, your goal in each level is to find the exit that leads to the next level. Usually, these exits are cleverly hidden and require you to first find a series of keycards to gain entrance to different areas. The levels range from exceedingly massive to small, but almost all of them include something that will have you laughing out loud or simply shaking your head in amazement (or shock). For example, step up to the microphone in the Fahrenheit level (episode 3) and hit the space bar, and you'll hear Duke perform a somewhat adult-oriented yet exceedingly juvenile radio commercial.

While the lunar levels are interesting, and feature many cool moon and earthscape visual effects, the more realistic Earth-based levels of the first and third episodes seem more compelling. You'll ride on dirty, graffiti-covered subways and explore a massive hotel and other buildings that have logical, believable designs—not to mention rats scampering about the streets, tunnels, air ducts, and hotel rooms.

The levels also "borrow" elements from hit movies. If you've seen *The Shawshank Redemption*, you'll recognize the solution to one of the shareware levels (a door hidden behind a poster), and if you fully explore the Hotel Hell level in Shrapnel City, you'll encounter a certain Dr. Jones and a variation of a well-known movie scene. While not incredibly unique, many of these "cameos" are simply hilarious.

Even Duke's voice—a gravelly blend of Clint Eastwood and Sly Stallone—is spectacular, matching his character perfectly. Duke can also be very humorous at times, especially in multiplayer games. Hit Alt-F1 and you'll say "You're an inspiration for birth control" to each of your opponents; combinations of Alt and the other F keys yield similar results. Duke also reacts to things that happen in a single-player game. Blow up a bad guy real good and he might quip, "That's gotta hurt!"

These are relatively minor features, but the game is brimming with them, and they work together to separate Duke Nukem 3D from all of the other Doom clones. In fact, Duke rises above Doom in nearly every way—graphics, sound, gameplay, and even controversy (which is saying a lot).

My only complaints are a bug that occasionally kills you when you pick up an item (solution: save often) and not enough different kinds of creatures (there are only six different main enemies and three boss characters, not counting the sharks in episode three). But these are mere quibbles, as the bug doesn't occur often and the game is more than challenging enough with the current mix of baddies on the higher skill settings.

3D Realm's inclusion of a graphical level-building editor, which you can use to design your own levels, means you can make up for any shortcomings yourself. (For more on the level editor and how to use it, see the next issue of *PC Games*.)

So get out there and start kicking some alien ass!

Big-Time Controversy

Duke may be a fun guy, but this controversial game includes a number of elements that are likely to offend some people.

First of all, the game is incredibly violent. Blood and guts splatter against walls and seep to the floor in close-quarter combat. Limbs, eyeballs, and bones explode all over the screen when kills are made with some of the more powerful weapons.

And that's not even the really controversial stuff. In addition to the strippers in the shareware version, nearly every level of the full game depicts women in various stages of undress. Many of them are bound and gagged, and some hang from the ceiling. All of them can be killed, and they issue a blood-curdling scream when shot. (In the game's defense, each time you kill one—by accident or on purpose—monsters appear to exact their revenge for destroying their means of reproduction. So, in fact, the game encourages you not to shoot them.)

Finally, Duke himself is known to utter scatological expletives in the heat of battle or when making a kill. A parental lockout feature is available that removes most of the gore and all of the racy material and swearing; but if this kind of stuff bothers you, Duke Nukem 3D is not the game for you.

—*SK*

Zapping enemies with the Freezethrower and then shattering them with your boot is particularly satisfying.

TIPS

- **To help eliminate unwanted surprises, throw Pipebombs into dark corners and small rooms before you enter them.**
- **Use the Pistol and the Chaingun Cannon to peg individual enemies from far away.**
- **Always keep the Medkit as your active inventory item so you can just hit the Enter key to increase your health when it drops below a hundred.**
- **If you freeze someone in multiplayer mode and then kill them, you'll get an atomic health.**

See Strategy & Tactics section on page 80 for more tips.

Asteroids with an attitude

Super Stardust

By Shane Mooney

Up until now, if you looked up the word "mediocre" in the gaming dictionary, you would have found an entry describing GameTek titles. Yet, somehow, despite an abysmal history highlighted by such drink coasters as Family Feud and First Encounter, the company has reached into its cyberbag of tricks and pulled out Super Stardust. This game will by no means set the world on fire, but it has managed to suck up more than the usual allotment of my valuable time.

In the final showdown, you can give Professor Schaumund what's coming to him—namely, death.

In a nutshell, Super Stardust is what Asteroids would have been if there'd been 486 processors and VGA graphics in the '70s. That's a good thing. And unlike most Asteroids imitators, Super Stardust actually has a plot.

Professor Schaumund, an evil, twisted mutant penguin genius, has matter-of-factly blown up the Earth and everyone on it. Luckily for you, you were stationed on Starbase Foak-474 at the time and survived unscathed. You might not mind it when people call you names, cut in line, or fail to recycle, but there's no way you're going to let a lone loony get away with turning the place you call home into intergalactic dust. You're the only one crazy enough to face him, so it's up to you to stop him before he blows up the Earth, destroying billions of innocent...wait a minute, he already did that. Okay, you've just got to find him and wipe that genocide-smirk from his face.

Eliminate oncoming asteroids before they destroy your ship.

TIPS

- On the main levels, start out firing from the middle. As the enemies and asteroids are depleted, rush over to get the goodies the asteroids leave behind.
- If you see a spinning coin with an X on it, be sure to grab it. It's an extra life.
- In the tunnels, try to stay at the top and slide back and forth while shooting at the oncoming hazards.

You hop into your modified Panther PX2i fighter and head off to face the pernicious penguin. Before you do that, however, you'll have to battle your way through 30 levels in 5 different worlds to reach the final showdown. With tongue firmly in cheek, you begin your adventure blasting away at asteroids, alien ships, and other space debris that may interfere with your plans.

The asteroids are nicely rendered, multi-colored 3-D rocks spinning your way. You've got to use a range of your weapons to blow them apart, employ your thrusters to make a quick break, and rely on your limited shields when the action gets heavy.

Almost every destroyed asteroid leaves behind goodies such as powerups and extra lives. Pick them up before they disappear and you may live to confront the evil penguin.

Once you've completed the six increasingly difficult levels in each of the five worlds, you'll enter a warp gate. Here you must maneuver through a 3-D tunnel, blasting and dodging oncoming rocks, rocket ships, and other hazards. In true arcade fashion, each world pits you against a boss in the final level until you face off with the big boss, the esteemed Professor himself. (I wonder where exactly this guy got tenure.)

Again, this is Asteroids for 1996: not exactly revolutionary, but a good time. And it bucks the current trend toward tortured character introspection, elaborate plots, and too much depth that makes many of today's games seem more like work than play. There are no asteroid-management facilities to worry about, no lunar colonies to build, and no multi-dimensional people to get in the way; it's just simple arcade fun.

If you remember staying up into the wee hours of the morning playing your Atari 2600 version of Asteroids, where the sole motivation was to seek and destroy, you'll undoubtedly find Super Stardust a pleasant—and more modern—way to kill some time.

Super Stardust
GameTek
800-426-3835

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386, 4MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA
Street Price: $40

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B-

Nothing fancy—just simple, solid arcade fun, updated for the '90s.

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Mystery Word Grid

		H				MYSTERY
			E			
P	I	N	C	H		W
		R				ORD
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH	W	PRESS	K	BLAST	A	WRECK	D
BREAK	Z	PUNCH	S	SPRAY	C	TURBO	V
STOMP	T	STAND	R	PRESS	E	DREAM	O
CRUSH	I	SCORE	H	SLANT	L	CHASE	P

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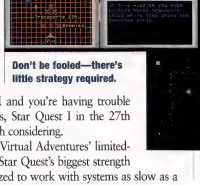
Good old-fashioned shooting fun

Star Quest I in The 27th Century

Prove yourself in battle to win better weapons and promotions.

By John Sauer

If you're looking for a space opera that'll set your Pentium on fire with full-motion video, incredible realism, and immersive 3-D, then you'd better keep looking. On the other hand, if you own an older 386 or 486 PC with only 4MB of RAM and you're having trouble finding compatible games, Star Quest I in the 27th Century is definitely worth considering.



Don't be fooled—there's little strategy required.

It's no Wing Commander IV, but Star Quest brings new life to older PCs.

The boxed version of Virtual Adventures' limited-level shareware offering, Star Quest's biggest strength is that it has been optimized to work with systems as slow as a 386DX/33 with 4MB of RAM and a single-speed CD-ROM drive (though the company does recommend a 486), with either MS-DOS 5.0 or higher. On one of these older machines, Star Quest looks and sounds better than average, plays fairly well, and is affordable enough (street price less than $25) to make it a worthwhile purchase.

The game drops you into the shoelaceless universe of the 27th century as a fledgling pilot with a hot ship and a potentially glowing future. Prove your mettle and you earn bigger engines, better shields, and more powerful weapons, not to mention rank and prestige. Attain commander level and you get to order around your own squadron in three out of the last four levels. Why no shoelaces? Read the manual. Let's just say that it's a velcro kind of world.

Gameplay consists of four basic categories—shooting, racing, tactical, and adventure—though each is basically oriented around destroying everything that isn't you. Thankfully, there's only one pure shooting level, a rather pointless kill-the-asteroids session. Most of the missions allow you to fly through space and over planets, blasting, bombing, and broiling lots of ground and aerial targets. There's also a preview option that lets you explore a mission before you start it. A fairly complex joystick, mouse, or keyboard control system gives you the ability to fly forward, hover, and even move backward; you'll spend most of your time revved up to high speed and spinning in circles as you try to get enemy spacecraft off your six and into your sights.

Visually, Star Quest is either pretty good or very average, depending on your point of view. The game is bit-mapped and disappointing when compared to Wing Commander IV and other modern titles. But within the 386/486 context, the texture-mapped objects and 3-D Gouraud real-time shading deliver a worthy gaming environment. Likewise, Star Quest offers reasonable sound effects and music choices, though a little voice would have added to the overall effect. Upcoming versions of Star Quest will be optimized for high-end 486s and Pentiums, presumably with suitable enhancements. Other plans include modem and Internet teamplay versions.

The only area where Star Quest falls flat is the shallowness of gameplay. Just about all of the missions center around copious blasting. Even though some sequences call for you to protect certain ships and destroy others, your hands (and brain) can get numb frying enemies. At the two easiest levels your ship is indestructible, which makes winning a little too easy, though there are 10 difficulty settings.

If you're looking for the latest and greatest to feed your Pentium, pass this one up. But if you want a game that will actually run well on a low-end system, Star Quest will give you something to chew on.

GET *The Demo*
http://www.pcgamesmag.com

Star Quest I in The 27th Century
Virtual Adventures
800-437-0005

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386DX/33, 4MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA, CD-ROM drive
List Price: $23.95

GAME PLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	C
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	C+

A worthy space-battle game for owners of older computers.

TIPS

- In the FWA HQ, turn right, then right again, and walk down the right side of the hall. Switch to the left when under the first underpass and back to the right under the second. That way, the guards on the walkway above can't see you.
- Once you reach the second level, don't wander too much: It's easy to get killed. Just go straight to the elevators at the end of the walkway.
- To see everything the FWA computer has to offer, shoot every red tile you see on your way in. If you miss something important, you'll know.

One intergalactic space surfer,
one totally thrash invasion fleet,
one killer babe . . .
. . . Cool!
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FORMGEN
CATCH THE WAVE APRIL 1ST

Make mine multiplayer

Assault Rigs

Assault Rigs is rife with multiplayer possibilities.

Like the PlayStation version that preceded it, Assault Rigs—a 3-D tank game from Psygnosis—combines two distinctly different experiences: multiplayer (via a serial connection or IPX network) and single player. One game works. The other doesn't.

The two share the essentials: an assortment of colorful, multilevel 3D arenas equipped with ramps, moving platforms and elevators, and pleasantly predictable physics that will sometimes lay your fallen "rig" on its back. The idea is to nab all the big floating gems and hightail it to an exit.

Assault Rigs
Sony Computer Entertainment
800-438-7794

Developer: Psygnosis
Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 6.0, sound card
List Price: not available

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	C+

Multiplayer games are a kick. The other people—up to eight—make all the difference. Whether you're taking part in the gem hunt or "The Big Rumble" (an all-out death match), the game is rife with possibilities for cooperation and revenge. (One hitch: modem play is not supported.)

Unfortunately, this competitive concept doesn't carry over into the one-player mode. The game doesn't provide any computer-operated rivals for the gems—it just puts obstacles such as turrets, roving critters, and electric bolts in your path. The lack of an opposing intelligence is sorely felt. While you'll have some fun trying to find the gems before the clock runs out—the 42 levels grow increasingly creative—the solo mode is essentially a bland, run-and-shoot maze game.

Moreover, the god-awful music masks an array of subtle sound effects. And Assault Rigs uses a password system (see Strategy & Tactics, page 82) rather than traditional computer-game saves, which is simply something else for players to lose or forget. The folks who ported Assault Rigs to the PC need to remember that computers have something called a "hard drive" to store data. Ring a bell?

—Peter Olafson

The Doom engine's last gasps

Hexen and Heretic

Heretic goes commercial in Shadows of the Serpent Riders.

Like Heretic before it, Hexen rose well above its Doomy forebears. In fact, no game driven by the Doom engine has risen so far. For depth, for inspiration, for uniqueness, for sheer outrageous size, it almost overcame the limitations of its 3-D game engine to become its own creature.

Sadly, few of those qualities have carried over into the new Hexen add-on, Deathkings of the Dark Citadel. As a result, this 20-level add-on pack (which requires Hexen) is something of a let-down.

It's not that these are bad levels by any means. They're fun, and many would have fit happily into Heretic. They are challenging, architecturally dense, and rich in creatures that do not love The Guy With the Big Axe (that's you).

But Hexen was something different, something rather extraordinary, and any transition from the extraordinary to the mundane is bound to prove disappointing. Hexen had the feel of a real world. Like many add-ons, separated from the ruling personality of the parent game, Deathkings comes off as a set of levels: more compact, more linear, more predictable.

On the other hand, the new incarnation of Heretic, Shadows of the Serpent Riders, uses predictability to good advantage. Shadows is more or less the Ultimate Heresy: it contains the three episodes of the original game (which was never sold commercially) and two tough new ones called The Ossuary and The Stagnant Demesne (I spy a well-thumbed thesaurus down at Raven headquarters).

The new levels in Shadows, to be sure, cover familiar ground. But it's good ground, solidly covered and usually purchased in the player's blood. Shadows is not as ambitious as Hexen. Then again, it doesn't have as far to fall.

—Peter Olafson

Heretic: Shadows of the Serpent Riders
GT Interactive
800-610-4847

Developer: Raven
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 4MB RAM, Heretic, CD-ROM drive
List Price: $34.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B

Hexen: Deathkings of The Dark Citadel
GT Interactive
800-610-4847

Developer: id Software
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, Hexen, CD-ROM drive
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B-

Produced by
InterWeave Entertainment

Dr. Elizabeth Duran

The colleague and lover of the late Dr. Everett Cussler, this beautiful and brilliant scientist has it all. Unfortunately, that's why somebody wants her dead.

Peter Cussler

Everett's scheming failure of a son. His resentment toward Elizabeth knows no bounds.

Rachel Cussler

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Candace Cussler

Driven to the brink by her husband Peter's impotence. Her desperate hunger for passion leads her to the bed of another.

Sylvio Donato

A longtime friend and financial advisor to the Cussler family. His intentions are not entirely honorable.

Colin Meyers

An ambitious and arrogant lawyer, he's drawn into Rachel's life of sex and drugs. But his real addiction is to Sandoval.

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Harvester

By Peter Olafson

Close to two years late, Harvester is a Stonekeep among graphic adventures. However, it is also a radical departure for this rather staid genre, and it may prove a watershed release for the industry at large. You may loath it or you may like it—I can't quite imagine anyone loving it—but, either way, you're probably going to have to come to grips with Harvester's impact.

Its best feature is sheer daring: Harvester's an adult adventure without being an "adult" adventure, if you get my drift. While the game was delayed for months as the initial floppy-only project grew to encompass three CD-ROMs, and months more to tweak the gameplay, designer Gilbert Austin and developer Future Vision don't seem to have held back anything in terms of content.

What do I mean? Well, in the interest of common decency, I'm prohibited from saying a whole lot about what I mean. Let's just say this bizarre fantasy comes off as a hybrid of Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun" video, the classic science-fiction movie *A Boy and His Dog*, and a broken bottle of ketchup.

Examine everything: inside this fountain is a vital key.

TIPS

- **Give Jimmy the newspaper every day, and pay attention to what he tells you about a swap.**
- **Check your dresser drawer. That quarter will come in handy.**
- **Be sure to inspect the ruins of the newspaper building.**
- **Be very careful when you talk to Col. Buster Monroe at the missile base. He's a nutball, and he has his finger on the button.**

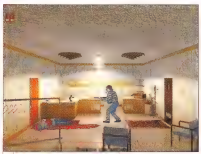
You play the part of Steve, who wakes up in the town of Harvest (population: 51 and dropping rapidly) with no memory of his supposed family or surroundings.

Everyone seems to know him except Stephanie, the girl to whom he's engaged—poor Steve has never met her at all. (Not surprisingly, Stephanie's part is entirely passive and not-a-little cheesecake-ish.) Steve's amnesia story has preceded him around town, and what does he get for his trouble? "Well, you always were a kidder, Steve," from everybody.

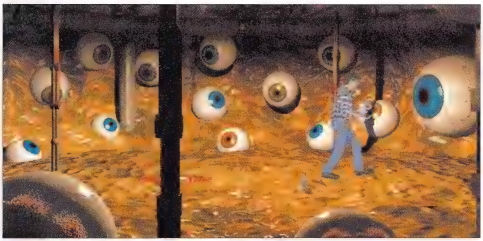
I mean, you'd *remember* stuff like this. The world seems to have drifted back 40 years, stood on its head, and spun like a top. The paperboy doesn't bring the paper, he collects it, and he's ready to bite your head off if you don't turn it over. The plants are plastic, but they've been watered. Your mother is baking cookies and then throwing them away. Your father, locked in his bedroom, is a heavily bandaged S&M victim. Your little brother is watching garishly violent cowboys-and-Indians movies. The postmaster turns out to be a pyro. The sheriff's deputy is an orgasm addict. The meat-packing plant has lots of meat, but no evidence of cattle. The baby is…Ack. You'll see.

The vortex is the mysterious Lodge near the town's center. You'll devote the first two-thirds of the game to exploring the town (moving from building to building on a handsome overhead-view map) in an attempt to get in. You'll spend the final third fighting and figuring your way through each of the Lodge's three levels. If you make it, you'll be faced with an awful decision—one that's sure to earn the game some serious heat. Let's just say it involves an…

Steve takes a stroll through the guts of the Lodge.



This game is not for the queasy.



Steve eyes his means of escape early on in the Lodge.

The kitchen's a good place to find some worm food.

unrelated to issues of taste. The inclusion of Harvest's effeminate fire department in this field of lunatics seems unfair to me. It's one thing to make fun of strange individuals; it's another to start in on whole sections of the population.

On strictly gameplay terms, the segue from adventure to action-adventure that attends entry into the Lodge tends to diminish the game's power at the very moment it should be mounting. (The fighting bits are Mortal Kombat only in terms of bloodshed. The weapons are many, but the moves are very basic, and it's easy to win if you have the right weapon.)

Moreover, the atmosphere isn't all that rich; the choice of black comedy over terror means Harvester is never genuinely scary. The game has a few irritating habits, too, such as beginning each day at home with a blank slate, so if you want to talk to your mother or brother, you've got to go through the same schtick every day. And some elements, like the inset stills used during conversation, seem a little stiff and out-of-date.

But these issues aren't really the point. You've never seen anything quite like Harvester. If you have an open mind, you just may have some fun. If you don't, well, you've been warned.

ahem... non-traditional career choice.

The style of gameplay is very similar to that of Dark Seed II: Video characters are superimposed on a computer-rendered backdrop. You move around, look at objects, and acquire an inventory using the mouse and a context-sensitive cursor. First on the agenda: getting an application for the Lodge. Then, for five days and nights, you'll roam Harvest in an attempt to perform tasks set for you by the doorkeeper. Things get ugly in a hurry, and one task results in a suicide.

Many people will deplore Harvester's violence (boy, can these characters ever bleed), smattering of profanity, and dark subject matter. Me, I kind of liked it. I liked it because it's different, and not just different for the sake of being different. Harvester has a consistent voice—unapologetically twisted—and in an industry accustomed to keeping the speedometer squarely on 55, it can be nice to see someone step on the gas and roar away from the crowd.

I liked it because it's darkly funny. Stop by the TV station, and you can chat with the celebrity cowboy until he excuses himself to answer the call of nature. He'll offer such pearls of wisdom as "Violence is as American as apple pie and low SAT scores." (The kicker: If you pay attention on Level One of the Lodge, you'll get to hear the whole conversation replayed, including what he says in the bathroom.)

I liked Harvester because, quietly but consistently, it's self-referential. It's not just violent so it can make a sale, though you can bet that won't hurt; it's *about* violence as a topic. Harvester is deep with optional solutions—things you don't have to do but can—and buried conversations that you can pry out of the game if you're thorough enough.

This, of course, is not to say Harvester doesn't have problems

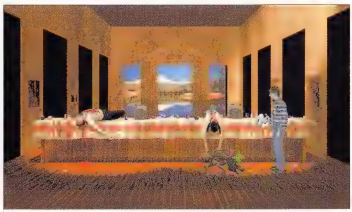
Harvester
Merit Software
800-238-4277

Developer: Future Vision
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $79.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B

B OVERALL

A unique spin on traditional adventure gaming, but it's not for everyone.



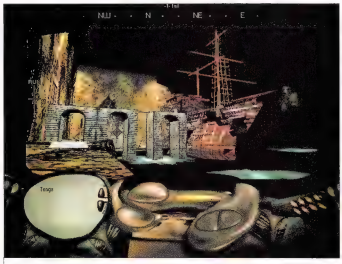
I guess this really was the last supper.

The Holy Grail of adventure games

PLAY the Demo on the disc

Azrael's Tear

By Peter Olafson



The old docks, one of the more spectacular sights in the game.

Now here we have an instant classic. Azrael's Tear does everything you'd expect a great graphic adventure to do, and it does it all in almost perfect synch. This first-person puzzler developed by England's Intelligent Games is not just a game; it's a regular symphony.

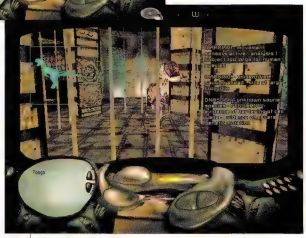
One of three new adventure games focused on the guardians of the Holy Grail—the others are I•Motion's Knight's Chase and Virgin's upcoming Circle of Blood—this gem from Mindscape sends you off to explore the centuries-old hideaway in which the Knights Templar have sequestered the legendary cup of Christ.

Of course, you're a creature of a new age. The third millennia has just dawned fatefully as you make your descent, and while the ageless knights are still decked out in always-fashionable chain mail, you're equipped with an elaborate, mouse-operated suit that feeds info on each new area onto your HUD (heads-up display), identifies objects and potential enemies, and even helps keep you alive when bad guys attack.

And attack they will. Along the way, you'll have to deal with a range of critters—some of them very large—and the internal politics of the bickering knights and the ambitions of other explorers. Sometimes you'll be able to talk your way through tight spots, and sometimes you'll need to let your guns do the talking.

This is the best game of its type that I've seen since Alone in the Dark. The splendidly detailed graphics convey perfectly the impression of extreme age, and the illustrated manuscripts that dot your path are gorgeous. The puzzles are rational and varied—not to mention well-hidden—and the game's superbly integrated action sidelight gives you the option to try things a different way (read: get your way through brute force). The subject matter is unfailingly literate and sophisticated. The music is often lovely, and the sound effects are appropriate and of impeccable quality; more to the point, they work well together. That synergy is the ultimate triumph of Azrael's Tear.

Geffrye is the architect of this maze. He's done a good job, and you won't find him until you're deep in the game.



Watch your step with this guy. You won't get a second chance.

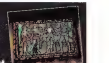
Even the intro is ideal: No 3-D renderings or full-motion-video sequences—just stark white text with a meaning both cryptic and awful. Azrael is a horsepower hog, and owners of even lower-end Pentium machines may want to run in reduced resolution to keep up the frame rate. Luckily, Intelligent Games has taken the time to add an "auto" resolution feature that drops the level of graphics during movement to preserve speed, but restores them to higher resolution when you stop. That way, you get the best of both worlds.

In fact, other than the fact that the inventory system might have been better organized, there's nothing here I don't like. Simply brilliant, Azrael's Tear is good enough to make any adventure gamer cry.

TIPS

- **Steer clear of the imprisoned raptor until he's dead. He may be behind bars, but he can still take a chunk out of you.**
- **Once the raptor's history, take a careful look at the columns around his cage. There are two triggers here; one of them is vital to your progress.**
- **Note that there are two different machines on the level above the mine head—a crusher and a saw.**
- **Check the diagram above one of the baths in the temple area for the correct alignment of the pipes in the well room.**

Azrael's Tear



Mindscape
800-234-3088

Developer: Intelligent Games
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: Pentium, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $44.99

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A

Beautiful, sensible, and well-balanced, this one's an instant classic.

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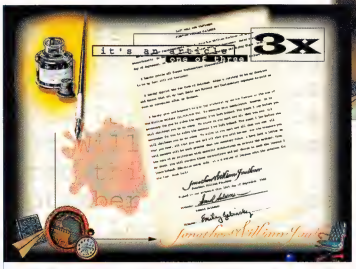
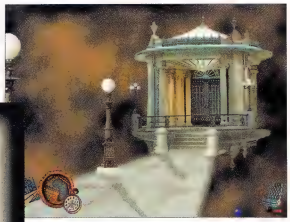
Treasure Quest

By John Sauer



A quality puzzler lies beneath the million-dollar hype.



Don't let the wonderful graphics distract you from your quest.

One million smackeroos. That's the grand prize Sirius Publishing has kicked in for coming up with the "ultimate solution" in Treasure Quest, a full-scale multimedia brainbender set in the mansion of a deceased music professor. The lovable old guy has left his personal fortune to the first of his students who can uncover all the clues and produce the final answer. You're one of those students, and if you're really, really good, the dead professor's dead presidents are yours.

Treasure Quest isn't so much a new kind of game as a new kind of marketing. Don't get me wrong—it's good and tough, like a puzzle game should be, with high production values, a strong story, and solid game play. But swinging a big-bucks prize behind the title has generated a fervor on the Internet. No longer a game, Treasure Quest has become a dead-serious race for the million-dollar reward.

The multimedia mystery takes place in the 10-room mansion of Professor Jonathon William Faulkner. Each room contains hidden words and phrases that fit together to form a quote. One puzzle, for example, forces you to use the initials from periodic tables to piece together words.

As you explore each room, you get some spiritual narration and clue-dropping from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* beauty Terry (Dax) Farrell. Get the correct quotes from all 10 rooms and you can submit the ultimate solution (no, I don't know what it is) for the million-dollar prize. The final answer isn't actually in the game, so crafty hackers won't have any advantage over us non-cheaters.

Treasure Quest is well done in almost every way. In fact, if there's anything not to like, it's the sheer difficulty of the puzzles. The clues are extremely perplexing. Some, such as letter grids, must be taken literally; others are cryptic and must be interpreted. Did you really expect Sirius to just throw a cool mil' into your lap?

Fortunately, the clues are bountiful. Each room contains "hot spots" that trigger Terry Farrell videos, music, sound bites, and other audio/visual clues. You'll also find links to other rooms. Players begin in the Den, but a little low-level sleuthing will uncover entrances to the Bedroom, Game Room, Kitchen, Garden, and Dining Room. As you gain entry to a room it shows up on the navigation wheel, allowing you direct access. Each location offers a variety of puzzles.

Treasure Quest features superb graphics, crystal-clear voices and sounds, and a hauntingly beautiful soundtrack (also included on a separate audio CD). You control game features such as navigating, recording thoughts, and returning to a room with a few basic icons. The game is mostly point-and-click, except for instances where you must type in a specific word or phrase.

Sirius has set up a Web site to support frantic players at **http://www.treasurequest.com**. The site has plenty of game information, and a chat room where some players are sharing their solutions (but don't trust everything you read). There's also a hint book full of background information that could be helpful in solving the game.

Right now, the moola is a lightning rod for players from all over the world, but what happens when someone claims the prize? (And it won't be long before groups of gamers are attacking the puzzles. Some clever gamer may already be rich.)

It would be a shame if all the interest evaporates, because Treasure Quest is a pretty damn good adventure game, and that's worth something, too.

• As posted on the Treasure Quest Web site, the quote from the Bedroom reads, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty —that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." It's from Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn." Of course, just knowing the quote isn't enough. To win the prize, you have to be able to explain exactly how you got it. • Here's a start. "Beauty is Truth" is the phrase that is scrambled in the bathroom letters. The second part, "truth beauty," is derived from the mirror on the stand by the bed. The chemical elements each have a symbol: Beryllium = Be, Gold = Au, Titanium = Ti, and Yttrium = Y. The screen tells you Titanium = I, so you need to add the T. These letters then combine to form the word Beauty. • That's only the beginning. You'll also need to mix equations, quotes, word counts, and other arcana to solve the puzzle. Hey, we told you it was difficult!

Treasure Quest
Sirius Publishing
800-247-0307

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95/Mac CD
Requires: 486/33 or higher, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	A

B+ OVERALL

Great graphics and sound, but a million bucks doesn't come easy. These puzzles are rough!

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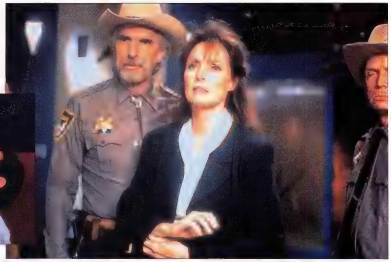
Voyeur II

By Shane Mooney

As its title suggests, the game is a little racy at times.



There's only 80 minutes of video, but you'll need to view some scenes several times.

Call it curiosity or just plain old snooping, but we humans have this innate longing to stick our noses into other people's private lives, especially when we think no one's looking. There's something about being able to watch the goings-on of our neighbors or eavesdrop on another's conversation that titillates our more primitive urges. If by chance we see something juicy and scandalous, all the better.

It's this basic premise that makes Voyeur II such a deliciously guilty romp—a game whose very goal requires you to spy on your neighbors, record their conversations, and take compromising photos.

Professor Plum in the study with a rope? Wait, wrong game.

You play a photographer who usually enjoys getting back to nature at his grandfather's solar-powered cabin. But things get more interesting when distinguished scientist Dr. Everett Cussler and his beautiful assistant, Dr. Elizabeth Duran, move into a house about 3,000 feet away. Over time you've equipped your little cabin with a movie camera and long-range microphone, so instead of just watching through your 35mm camera—the only way to peep in the original Voyeur—you get to see and hear what's going on.

The game opens with you looking in on the living room of your neighbors, where a will is being read for the late Dr. Cussler. Much to everyone else's dismay, all his stock and control of his megacorporation have been left to Duran. As you follow her to the study, you discover that Dr. Cussler was actually murdered, and if you hadn't guessed it so far, Elizabeth is likely to be next. You need to piece together who murdered Cussler, capture their admission on film, and catch whoever's trying to take care of Elizabeth. Kind of like a PG-13 version of Hitchcock's classic *Rear Window*.

Your task may sound relatively easy for a skilled adventure gamer, but it's not. You see, there are many rooms in the house, several of which may have conversations going on simultaneously. While you're watching Cussler's son and his wife get in a heated argument in his bedroom, for example, Cussler's daughter and her lover are discussing dark future plans.

The game has a total of 80 minutes of video, but you're going to have to play it through more than once to see everything and figure out who's doing what to whom. Of course, this means you'll have to watch many of the scenes several times; you'll become very familiar with the one where the coroner hauls off Elizabeth's dead body and sheriff John Parker, played by Dennis Weaver, mumbles to himself about how he wishes there were witnesses to the crime. (For more on Weaver's participation, see Star Talk, page 14.) Once you figure out the chain of events, you can play through the game in roughly 30 minutes.

As you play, you'll want to be careful with your solar power. You'll need to ration it if you expect to grab the important footage before your equipment grinds to a halt.

In just about every way, this sequel is tremendously better than the original. You have much more interaction, and having sound and pictures makes spying far more enjoyable.

Some may find that the multiple movies make getting to the bottom of the mystery more of a challenge than they'd like, but then again, that's the whole point of the game. Anyone who's got a telescope next to their bedroom window or is addicted to soap operas will find Voyeur II the ideal game for the Peeping Tom in all of us.

T.I.P.S.

- **Follow only one person at a time. You're not going to solve the mystery the first time through, so don't even bother trying. Get everyone's story and then piece together the puzzle.**
- **Use your video camera sparingly or your power will run out long before the night is over.**
- **Explore the rest of the room, including looking at slides. They offer valuable clues.**
- **After listening to the radio show, be sure to adjust the remote next to the camera to match the temperature given.**

Voyeur II
Philips Media Games
800-883-3767

Platform: DOS CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486/66DX2, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	B-

This interactive movie has enough shameless intrigue and scandal to keep you watching—and playing.

Philip Marlowe Private Eye

PLAY the Demo on the disc

For a character who's more than 50 years old, it's amazing how well Philip Marlowe has aged. Utterly fearless, consistently moral, Raymond Chandler's tough-guy detective has an appeal that has transcended his literary roots and film-noir flicks. In fact, with the debut of Byron Preiss' Private Eye, he's looking like a promising new adventure hero.

In Private Eye, an interactive murder-mystery based on Chandler's novel "The Little Sister," players get to help Marlowe with one of his toughest cases. Orfamay Quest, a quiet, small-town woman, wants Marlowe to find her brother, Orrin, who's apparently vanished. Of course, what begins as a simple missing-person case soon involves blackmail, murder, anger, and betrayal.

Private Eye's dark, moody animation and occasional camera tricks give it a cinematic feel.

A moody jazz track and some very stylized visuals (think graphic novels) supplement the complex, engaging storyline. If the atmosphere doesn't seduce you, the actors' captivating voiceovers—especially Steven D'Ambrose's Marlowe—will.

You play much of the game via a mouse-driven desktop with some helpful detective tools: a growing map of places you can visit, an expanding dossier of people you meet, and a diary that lets you review conversations and items you've found.

When you're not in the office with your gadgets, you're either talking to people, searching their homes, or trying to avoid the police. In some of the locations there's more than one course of action: open the door or hang back for awhile; talk to the police or keep your mouth shut. Different paths lead to different events: Miss out on a crucial conversation, and the wrong people could suffer.

My biggest complaint about Private Eye is that while the conversations are engaging, the number of times you're choosing between events, not just listening, should have been a bigger piece of the action. Still, the game does a great job of capturing the feel of a distinctive genre.

—*Corey Cohen*

Philip Marlowe Private Eye
Byron Preiss Multimedia
800-223-2336

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486SX/25, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or later, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
Estimated Street Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	B

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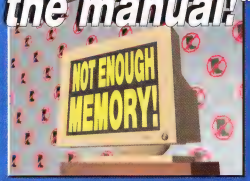

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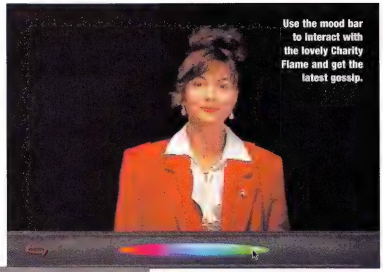
If Melrose Place *were a game...*

Mode

By Christina Cheney



Use the mood bar to interact with the lovely Charity Flame and get the latest gossip.

Welcome to Club Mode, a virtual nightclub based on an actual bar in Ottawa, Canada. You don't need a fake ID to get in, though you will be asked at the door whether you're 19 or over.

This trendy electronic bistro is both a Web site (**http://www.clubmode.com**) and a CD-ROM game from Animatics, the folks who developed 1994's Midnight Stranger. For now the continuing social drama of the Web site is based on the fictitious characters and storyline established in the CD-ROM. As the Web site grows and spawns social dramas of its own, future discs will be based on the personalities and events that occur online. You don't need the disc to visit the Web site.

The debut CD-ROM, simply called Mode, is a video-based interactive drama set in a world of high-tech intrigue and allure.

Manipulating these letters will give you a clue to Vito's cult practices.

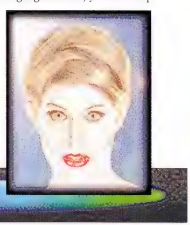
The mood bar is quite effective, and can elicit a variety of very different reactions from characters. When I first encountered Vito, for example, I stayed on the extreme red end of the mood bar and was quickly ejected from the party by Tuba, a well-dressed bouncer.

Once I got back in I dealt with Vito in a more cordial manner, of the bluish to greenish type, and he warmed up and told me who could provide me with a dome pin. Thus equipped, I was free to roam through the club's different rooms, watch fashion shows, and interact with the people I met. When you're inside, click on anyone you're interested in and then click on a bar to set an emotional tone and develop a relationship. Whatever your sex or orientation, you're likely to find someone interesting at Club Mode.

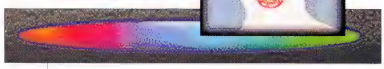
Scattered throughout the party are sleek computer kiosks, or Mode Machines. Clicking on a terminal starts an MTV-esque games episode with punchy music. Clicking on one of the letters in the word MODE at the bottom of the screen takes you into another theme-based experience with video. The Mode Machines hold vital clues to the mystery of Vito's secret cult.

There are six different endings to this slick, soap-opera adventure; which one you get depends on how you manipulate the mood bar. If you're having a good time, you can keep playing on the Web.

If you're the kind of person who spends Monday nights glued to the tube to watch *Melrose Place*, you may want to spend the rest of the week at Club Mode.



Lady Mode, your video hostess, helps guide you through the MODE event.



Pick a color on the mood bar to respond to the characters. Choose wisely—your attitude determines the outcome of the game.

TIPS

- **Reil Attaycheck has something you need. Keep going left to find him once you enter the party. He should be one of the first people you meet. Be nice when you talk to him—stay on the green end of the mood bar.**
- **The Mode Machines hold a crucial clue about the secrets of Vito Brevis. Anagrams of the word MODE will yield the clue.**

Players spend a wild night at the most talked-about party of the year. Of course, there's more to this chic multimedia soiree than schmoozing with the rich and beautiful. There's an ominous feeling in the air, and it emanates from your enigmatic host, Vito Brevis, and his rumored cult activities. Your goal, of course, is to discover whether or not these rumors are true.

Vito's exclusive Mode event is by invitation only, so your first task is to secure a dome pin that serves as your ticket. You interact with the characters at the party by clicking on the mood bar, a handy tool reminiscent of a '60s mood ring. There's no dialogue on your part, just the chance to modulate the emotional warmth of your response by clicking on the mood bar's various colors. These range from green to red, representing positive and negative emotional responses and everything in between.

Mode
Corel Corporation
800-772-6735

Developer: Animatics
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, 16-bit sound
List Price: $69

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B

An entertaining romp reminiscent of prime-time soap operas.

Spiral into the subterranean tomb of Qin Shi Huanghdi.

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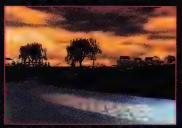
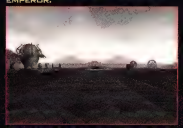


Explore five photo-realistic realms of perilous beauty and splendor.



Incredibly beautiful, high resolution, 3-D rendered graphic adventure game.

"Indiana Jones meets *Myst*."

—Steven Greenlee, Computer Game Review

QIN

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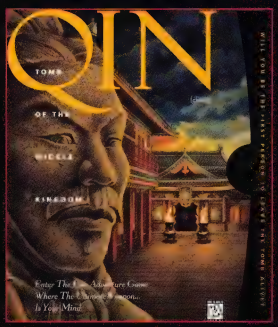
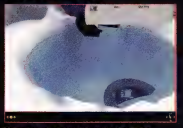
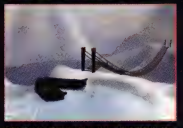


Solve puzzles and avoid traps as you find your way toward multiple game endings.



Compass guided navigation with pull-down realm maps to guide you through the tomb.

Music score recorded on authentic period Chinese instruments creates a full stereo soundscape.



Do you possess the wisdom to unearth the tomb's secret?

TOUR QIN ON THE INTERNET AT
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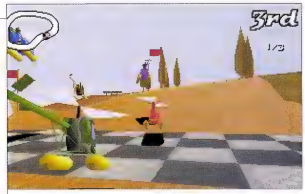
Don't think, drive!

Big Red Racing

By Daniel Morris



Choppers add extra dimension to the racetrack.

A pure arcade speed feast, Domark's Big Red Racing brings excellent graphics and a variety of vehicles to your everyday racing game, Nitro button and all. (Lead foots only need apply.)

Big Red covers a lot of ground (and water and sky) in a lot of different vehicles—16, to be exact. You can choose from 24 tracks located all over the world, with each race tailored to each location's geography. You can even tear up the turf on Mars and Venus.

Each track offers a choice of two variations on the same theme. On rock courses, for example, you can commandeer a dump truck or a bulldozer, or head to space and choose between a hovercraft and an all-terrain rover. In all, you can choose from choppers, boats, monster trucks, lunar buggies, and more for your driving, boating, and flying pleasure.

The graphics are a treat. The meticulous texture-mapping gives you a lot to look at, though you won't have much time to stop and smell the roses. While upside-down in a gully off the side of the road, I found myself remarking, "Wow, that's nice" at the view from the driver's seat.

No wheels or wings needed on this course.

The sound design is also involving, full of gear-shifting and fender-grating. Just do yourself and the world a favor by toggling off the obnoxious commentary. Not five seconds into the game's first screen, I was scrambling like mad to find the Sound Options screen and shut it up.

In space, no one can hear your tires scream.

Another sharp feature is a very versatile camera that you can place pretty much anywhere to follow the action. Pull it back to get a command view of the race, or push it right up to the windshield for a bug's-eye view. This feature even makes saved replays worth watching, as you can use your mouse to manipulate the camera placement (forward, back, left, right) from anywhere in the game world.

Gameplay is geared toward the kind of person who just wants to floor it, coherent thought be damned. You're never out of the race—it doesn't matter if you're driving the wrong way for a lap or taking a leisurely sight-seeing stroll through the mountains. There's always time to catch up, thanks to computer opponents with lemming-like creativity and Nitro boosts that can turn your raft's outboard motor into an instant Pratt-Whitney turbofan.

Big Red Racing has a back story, but since Domark confined it to a half-page of text buried deep in the manual, I won't waste time with it either. It doesn't come up once during the game, and I didn't even stumble upon it until I was going over the vehicle specs in the manual.

Beyond individual races, the single-player Tournament is a bit of a bore, and seems tacked on as an afterthought. You take on five computer opponents in each race as you advance through Easy, Medium, and Hard circuits; you can practice each of these skill levels in the Single Race mode. It quickly lost my interest.

Luckily, the game supports network play for up to six players, as well as modem and serial play for two players (in DOS only). If you need an extra edge, you can handicap other players by adjusting the amount of damage your vehicle can take before exploding.

Big Red's definitely not much more than a "last one to the finish line buys the Pringles" game, but at least it's a visceral joyride.

T I P S

- When racing helicopters, be sure not to fly above the Checkpoint banners. If you do, you'll have to go back.
- The water vehicles can pass over land for the brief moment it takes to cut corners at island beaches.
- Save your Nitro for the final lap, when you can pour it on for a charge to the finish line.
- Make liberal use of the Respot button to set you back on course when you stray. Save a little time by anticipating your errors and Respotting before you actually end up off the track.

Big Red Racing
Domark Software
415-513-8729

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, DOS 6.0 or Win 95, 8MB RAM, sound card
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B

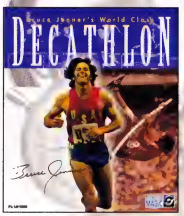
B- OVERALL

A reasonable price, quality graphics, and lots of variety make Big Red worth a look.

Bruce Jenner's World Class

DECATHLON

Take home the gold, with Bruce Jenner as your coach!



PC CD-ROM

You feel the sweat dripping off your brow, hear the roar of the crowd, taste the sweetness of victory. Your pulse races as you await the shot from the starter's pistol. Today is the day. This is the moment you've been training for your entire decathlon career.

Bruce Jenner's World Class Decathlon, using real-time action, is a realistic simulation of the World Class Championship. Endorsed by the World Champion, Bruce Jenner, the title promises to bring all the excitement of this year's Summer Games directly to players so they can compete for the gold in their own homes!

- Includes all ten decathlon events, from the 100 meter dash to the pole vault, the discus, and more!
- Practice in single events, one by one, or start and compete through a full 10-event decathlon.
- Assume the role of one of eight competing athletes from around the world.
- Bruce Jenner, the World Champion Decathlete, appears as your "on-line" coach, providing hints and tips on how to excel throughout the game.

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A new standard in chopper sims

AH-64D Longbow

By Anthony Lukban

Unlike it's predecessor the Apache, the Longbow has two Multifunction displays.

Like the Native American weapon it's named after, the AH-64D Longbow is both mobile and powerful. Jane's Combat Simulations brings this bird to life in an ambitious and realistic flight sim.

The state-of-the-art in attack helicopters, the Longbow is the successor to the AH-64A Apache, which earned its fame during the invasion of Panama and the Gulf War. From the outside, the two choppers look very similar, though the Longbow adds a distinctive radar dome on the rotors. In fact, the game lets you fly both the Longbow and the Apache, depending on the mission.

Stingers, Hellfires, Rockets, and a 30mm cannon are the only items in this 'copter's ordinance menu.

Longbow begins with an awe-inspiring computer-animated sequence showing you what this machine can do, then leads you to a highly rendered overhead view of your airfield, which acts as the menu. There's an audio tutorial designed to familiarize you with the aircraft's complex avionics and the nuances of helicopter attack tactics.

Once confident of your flying abilities, especially the "nap-of-the-earth" technique of following terrain contours at extremely low altitudes, it's time to create a pilot identity and choose a mission. You can fly historical missions set in Panama in 1989 or Iraq in 1991, or take part in a 29-mission fictional campaign in the Baltics. You can also set up a quick mission or custom-tailor a mission in desert, jungle, or forest environments.

The missions will pit you against tanks, anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), other helicopters, foot soldiers, and even enemy jets. Specific challenges include combat-air support, escort missions, and target-specific tasks. You're accompanied by a wingman on each mission, who will follow your commands to the best of his abilities and warn you about various threats.

As you lift off, you see an accurately rendered cockpit, but your field of vision extends only from shoulder to shoulder. There is no virtual cockpit showing the rest of the aircraft interior. A helmet view lets you scan to the limits of the pilot's neck, but shows only sky and ground. A number of reasonably detailed external views show the position of your aircraft and all the other objects in the battle.

On the high-res settings, Longbow's graphics are quite good—even better than those in Jane's Advanced Tactical Fighters. Since helicopters stick relatively close to the ground, terrain detail is critical, and Longbow uses two discs to hold information for the different terrains and objects used in the various missions. It helps, as the sharp terrain and detailed buildings and smoke offer useful visual cues to gauge your altitude and position when flying or hovering at low altitudes.

Detailed terrain and objects make this sim very attractive.

Unfortunately, all this eye and ear candy takes a toll on the video frame rate. If you have anything less than a 90Mh Pentium with 16MB of RAM, you'll probably need to switch to low or medium resolutions for faster performance.

Longbow has all the chops to establish itself as the No. 1 realistic helicopter sim, supplanting Interactive Magic/Digital Integration's excellent Apache (see review, *Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 134). The game will also make you appreciate the skill and courage of the people who fly this aircraft in real-life battle situations. It ain't easy on the PC, so just imagine what it's like with real bullets whistling by your head.

TIPS

- **Slamming against a mountain before you get to the target is not fun. Unless there's a SAM site near your departure point, use the autopilot until you are within 5 km of your target.**
- **When clearing areas for extraction or a drop, make sure you clear *everything*, including enemy foot soldiers. These guys can shoot you down with small-arms fire.**
- **Staying close (below 75 ft) to rugged terrain such as hills and mountains is the best way to stay undetected—and stay alive.**

AH-64D Longbow
Jane's Combat Simulations
800-245-4525

Developer: Origin Systems
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	A-

If you're a serious chopper-sim aficionado, you gotta get Longbow.

Savage

By Barry Brenesal

In computer games, as in films, just about any hit spawns look-alikes—some good, some awful. The latest me-too trend, believe it or not, is animal simulations. Sanctuary Woods got things rolling last year with Wolf and Lion, and now Discovery Channel Multimedia climbs aboard with Savage.

The new game is all about being a lion in the Serengeti. Ten "chapters" take you through different periods of a male lion's life, from cub to leader of the pack. During that time you learn to hunt and defend, conquer foes, gain a pride, and lead it across the landscape. There are more than 20 different creatures to avoid and stalk, including leopards, gazelles, Masai warriors, and even camera-toting tourists.

Jeez—the Serengeti's getting pretty crowded these days.

Once you get beyond these basic elements, however, there isn't much variety. Anyone who has dealt with the depth of the best first-person, real-time action games is bound to ask, "Okay, what's next?" Unfortunately, Savage's entertainment and information value are very, very low. There are a few video clips, but no help system, much less an extensive, cross-indexed documentation file on the life of a lion. (Sanctuary Wood's Lion, on the other hand, has an excellent multimedia section covering the life cycle and habits of the big cats.)

Savage's graphics are equally disappointing. The animation uses very few frames, so your lion and its enemies come across as jerky, two-dimensional silhouettes. A meerkat simply changes from standing to reclining without any intermediate steps, for instance. And nothing is less inclined to promote the illusion of a lion stalking its prey than the crouch command, which pushes your lion close to the ground, then jumps that image forward one large space at a time. The impression is of an animal skating on all fours, not sneaking up on prey.

Jerky animation spoils Savage's photorealistic graphics.

The poor animation also affects gameplay. If you swing your lion around to confront its prey, the arc frequently appears out of sync—too far to the left or right—and it's hard to determine just where to aim, even when faced with a stationary target.

Savage's interface has its own problems. For one, there are no descriptions of what each of the five camera angles does. Sometimes they don't seem to work at all; other times a single keypress zooms you in or out all the way, rather than incrementally. When you're facing dangerous poachers, this can be more than simply frustrating—it can be life-threatening.

The ideas in Savage present interesting possibilities, but the haphazard implementation means there's barely a game here. Savage doesn't come through with a roar—in fact, it barely whimpers.

Savage
Discovery Channel Multimedia
800-678-3343

Developer: Verdis
Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	D-
GETTING STARTED:	D-
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	D-
OVERALL	D-

An interesting—if unoriginal—concept plagued by weak graphics, weak instruction, and weak gameplay.

Steer clear of this one. If you want to be a big cat, check out Sanctuary Wood's Lion.

A creampuff no longer

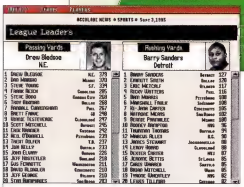
Unnecessary Roughness '96

By Andrew Miller

The onfield action has heated up considerably.

Few veteran sports gamers would dispute Accolade's reputation for producing awesome-looking sports sims. The Hardball baseball series, Brett Hull Hockey '95, and Unnecessary Roughness '95 all shared the same outstanding graphics and smooth gameplay. Unfortunately, these products also shared a common flaw—their computer opponents were cupcakes with a capital "C."

It seems Accolade's programmers have rolled up their sleeves and tried to solve the Cupcake problem with Unnecessary Roughness '95's sequel, imaginatively titled Unnecessary Roughness '96. That's good news, because for the most part, they've succeeded.



Players' statistics are much more realistic this time around.

Unnecessary Roughness '96 has all the traditional characteristics of an Accolade sports title: impressive graphics, realistic animation, and smooth gameplay. But more importantly, it offers a challenging computer opponent—one that learns from its mistakes and makes the necessary adjustments. This combination makes UR '96 highly competitive with all the other football sims on the market, and a sure-fire Super Bowl participant.

The game has also upgraded its realism with the addition of authentic NFL defenses, which translates into more realistic statistics and a much more competitive game every time you take the field. No longer will your quarterback be able to throw for 10,000 yards a season (I actually had one that passed for 12,565 yards and 105 TDs in a 16-game regular season in UR '95) and your running back rush for 5,000 yards. It's just not gonna happen.

UR '96's graphics are equally satisfying. For example, when an offensive player goes in motion you can actually see all the defensive linemen turn their heads to follow him as he runs behind the offensive line. And the players themselves are large and nicely detailed. The game offers a variety of playing perspectives, but the most effective way to view any football sim is from directly behind the offensive backfield.

Monday Night Football play-by-play man Al Michaels is back to call all the action. His commentary is a little slow at times, but it does add to the game. Super Bowl official Jerry Markbriet joins this season to call first downs, penalties, and scores. Nothing against Markbriet, but his appearances simply interfere with the action.

You won't have that problem with the game's controls. They're a little more responsive this time around, so it's easier to avoid tacklers and get those extra yards. I recommend using a gamepad. The keyboard will limit your movement, and a joystick is a little clumsy to use with a football sim. Accolade has added an "oomph" button that gives you a little extra mustard on your passes or helps you break tackles. It's a nice feature, but be careful with it—that little bit of added power can lead to a dropped pass, even from a sure-handed receiver like All-Pro Jerry Rice.

You also get more than 1,300 NFL plays to choose from—five times the number in UR '95. If you want to draw up your own plays, UR '96's playbook editor is one of the best; you don't have to be an NFL coach to figure it out.

UR '96 is a complete computer football game: excellent graphics, responsive controls, and a competitive opponent. Add everything up and you've got one of the best arcade football games on the market.

TIPS

- **Don't face a would-be tackler head on. Go at him at an angle and rotate your joystick or gamepad to avoid the tackle.**
- **Don't switch to the nearest defender if you've failed to stop the ball carrier with the player you're controlling on defense. Nine times out of 10 you'll end up missing on tackle because it's hard to tell exactly which player the computer will switch you to next.**
- **Despite upgrades in the defense, the computer still loves to run a lot of zone defenses. Flood a zone with several receivers and you'll always have an open man.**

Unnecessary Roughness '96
Accolade
408-985-1700

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, VESA-compatible Super VGA card, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	B+

Better computer competition makes UR '96 a Super Bowl contender.

The best playing view is from directly behind the offensive backfield.

YOU CAN WATCH HIM ON TV.

YOU CAN READ ABOUT
HIM IN THE SPORTS SECTION.

OR YOU CAN SEND HIM IN TO
PITCH RELIEF IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH.

No matter how you slice and dice the lineup, when you play *Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96* you'll be playing the Big Unit of baseball sims. It's the only game that relies on more than stats to put the ball in play. It also goes deep to take a look at wind, humidity, ball spin, and bat speed on every single swing. Graphics hit a dinger too, with ultra-realistic motion-captured 3D animation, and camera controls that let you watch from anywhere in all 28 big league ballparks. Then there's the section where you can slip into the body of any active major leaguer and show your stuff at pitching, hitting, and fielding. The coolest thing, though, is that you get to make managerial decisions that are highly questionable. Or, possibly, pure genius.

SIERRA®

Wanna see some amazing screen shots? Log on at http://www.sierra.com, AOL or Compuserve. To order the game, call 1-800-757-7707.

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To build an empire

Conquest of the New World

By Shane Mooney

The graphics of the New World contain a surprising amount of detail.

Ahh, to have lived in the good old days when you could look forward to exploring an undiscovered country. What could equal the thrill of being the first European to see an uncharted lake, discover a rich gold deposit, or come across a new civilization untouched by outside influences?

Yet exploration wasn't all excitement and romance. Don't forget spending months on end trapped on a crowded, fetid ship with nothing to eat but diseased rats and your boiled leather shoes (can you say "scurvy"?). And what about the constant threat of being brutally murdered by natives who didn't take kindly to you exploiting their land? Worse yet, there was always the possibility of dying a slow and painful death by contracting one of the many fatal conditions of the day, such as diarrhea.

But fear not, vagabond, because now you can have all the fun and adventure of being a continent-conquering conquistador without the danger of being scalped with Interplay's latest title, Conquest of the New World.

Native Americans can be your friends or foes depending on the strategies you employ.

This strategy game sends you back to the 15th century as one of five European countries or the Native Americans, vying for the resources and riches of the New World. Representing England, France, Spain, Holland or Portugal, you must take your men to this new land and explore what lies beyond the edges of your map. You must balance building, politics, and warfare in your quest to attain independence, build the ultimate nation, and achieve supreme victory. The Native Americans' goal, of course, is to hold on to what's theirs.

Once you've chosen a good site to land your ship, your first objective is to explore the surrounding area. As you dispatch your explorers and soldiers, you'll discover new rivers, mountain ranges, and other landmarks. With each new discovery comes new accolades and adulation from the folks back home, which is essential to keeping your king happy. Not only will you discover geological wonders, but you'll also meet up with colonies from other countries, as well as friendly and hostile natives.

You'll need to cultivate your powers of diplomacy when you deal with these newfound friends and foes: It's vital to build trusts and create treaties to successfully co-exist with others. If you've never been one to work as a team, you can opt to plunder everything in sight and pray that your forces are powerful enough to withstand your neighbors' ire. But attack the wrong colony or break a treaty and you may find yourself at odds with a society that is hellbent on wiping you from the face of the Earth.

If that's not enough responsibility for you, you'll also have to provide your colony (populated with a bunch of world-class whiners) with all the basics, which range from gold and metals to wood and crops. If you can't produce them, you're going to have to trade for them, and that's where skilled diplomacy comes in. Once you've given the colonists what they need, your settlement will grow and prosper, as will you. As you progress, your township becomes bigger and better, and you're well on your way to ruling the New World.

Conquest of the New World
Interplay
800-969-4263

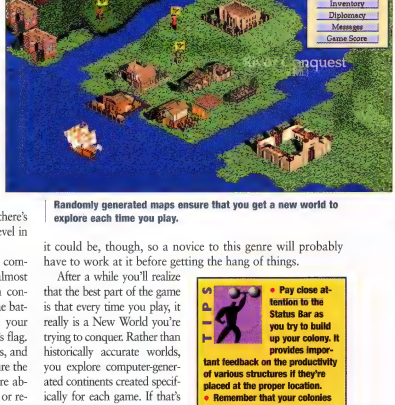
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, DOS 5.0, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A

If you buy only one "explore and conquer the world" game this year, you'd better make it this one.

Conquest's combat mode alone puts it ahead of most games.

Choose to play as one of six societies, including the English and Native Americans.



Randomly generated maps ensure that you get a new world to explore each time you play.

Conquest of the New World's Super VGA graphics are excellent, and the animations have a surprising amount of detail. You can zoom in closer and closer to particular facets of your colony to get a better idea of what's going on, or merely to admire its growth from afar. All this detail can bog down the game at times, even on a Pentium, but it's worth the wait.

Once your colony reaches a prosperous stage, you can make much of the micro-management—things like setting up and maintaining trade routes with other colonies—entirely automatic. In fact, it can be so automatic that if you choose, you can almost sit back and just watch the game play itself for you. But naturally, there's plenty of control, so you more anal-retentive types can revel in influencing all the goings-on.

Bucking a recent trend in the genre, Conquest offers a combat mode that is actually quite enjoyable. In fact, it's almost enough to constitute an entire game unto itself. When confronted by the enemy, you can choose to duke it out on the battlefield like gentlemen. The game then places you and your opponent on a grid with the goal of capturing each other's flag. You take your turn to use your allotted moves and attacks, and then your opponent does the same. The first one to capture the flag or kill all the enemy's forces wins. The animations are absolutely wonderful, depicting your forces as they advance or retreat from square to square. A stirring, full-orchestra score and realistic 15th-century sound effects help completely immerse you in the battles.

Realizing they had a winner, the designers made it possible to play nothing else but the combat mode, which makes for a very enjoyable 10-minute break from the game. The only problem is, it's so good, you may find your 10-minute session turning into an hour's worth of battles.

There's a lot of depth to this game, and thankfully, there's a tutorial to help less-experienced players become more familiar with the intricacies. The tutorial is not as complete as it could be, though, so a novice to this genre will probably have to work at it before getting the hang of things.

After a while you'll realize that the best part of the game is that every time you play, it really is a New World you're trying to conquer. Rather than historically accurate worlds, you explore computer-generated continents created specifically for each game. If that's not enough, you can play a network game with up to five human players, or go head-to-head with a friend via modem or serial cable.

Let's just say that Conquest of the New Word has managed to colonize a permanent spot on my hard drive as I continue exploring its riches.

TIPS

- **Pay close attention to the Status Bar as you try to build up your colony. It provides important feedback on the productivity of various structures if they're placed at the proper location.**
- **Remember that your colonies get productivity bonuses for specializing in your most common buildings.**
- **If you keep getting your butt kicked in combat, exit your session and watch the Combat Demo with the computer running both opponents to see how it's done.**
- **Be sure to pay your taxes to the Mother Country. Otherwise they'll assume that you've declared independence and wage war on you whether you're prepared or not.**

Micromanage an empire

Deadlock

By Barry Brenesal

Seven alien races were locked in fierce combat for a rare gem—a newly discovered, habitable planet called Gallius IV. Realizing their fighting was about to destroy the precious find, they called a truce. They decided that each race would send a group of colonists down to the planet with a small supply of essential materials. The first team to build five prosperous cities or eliminate all the other races would win ownership of the planet.

That's the premise for Accolade's Deadlock, and if it sounds like an excuse for yet another variant on the old strategic empire-building theme, well, it is. Fortunately, though, Deadlock brings some fine artificial intelligence, entertaining and intriguing alien races, network and Internet play, and visual panache to the table.

Deadlock is filled with beautiful graphics and clever animations.

Each alien race is unique, and each has plenty to say in the course of a game.

As is typical of its genre, Deadlock is a turn-based game that hinges on astute juggling of priorities. You have to harvest resources, gather taxes, build structures, and learn technologies. All this lets you develop better armaments to guard against and/or attack your opponents.

Deadlock lacks the diplomatic dimension of other strategic games such as Ascendancy and Master of Orion, so you can't form treaties of mutual defense or increased trade benefits. (In a networked game, human players can establish treaties with one another using an in-game message facility.) You can set victory conditions that are nonmilitary, however, such as the first race to build 10 city centers.

Obviously, Deadlock is more into micromanagement than most of the competition. You not only have to decide what to build, but where to expand and how to supervise your 10 resource types, such as lumber and iron. The first thing you must choose is a landing site, where you'll develop your first colony. Each potential landing site has terrain advantages and disadvantages—wood is more common in forests, but iron collects within mountains, for example. And because the sites are rather small and buildings take up a lot of acreage, you're quickly forced to colonize adjoining territories. You can harvest different resources in various areas and move them about, but that consumes time and money.

Meanwhile, your opponents are doing their best to frustrate your beneficent efforts to conquer everything in sight. Each of the seven races has distinct advantages that it exploits most cleverly. The chitinous ChCh-t grow quickly, and their scouts can steal resources from enemy territories, but their military units are weak. Humans have lower transportation costs than other races, and a Bezerk battle order that doubles a military unit's attack strength during battle but eliminates the unit when its work is done.

Combat itself is a mixed bag. There are many different military units, but battles lack the hands-on, turn-by-turn control and excitement of Master of Orion and Ascendancy. You can order military units to attack other units, buildings, or all the enemies in a zone, but the animated battle sequences are brief and not very compelling.

Deadlock's graphics are attractive in a Sim City/Ascendancy fashion, with slight improvements. Roads (occupied by very small, animated figures) are added automatically when you place new buildings in a territory, which is a nice touch. You also see different levels of construction in progress as turns pass. Race representatives are displayed using video claymation techniques, and distinctive music accompanies their appearance.

With support for up to seven players in network and Internet play, and head-to-head play via modem or serial cable, Deadlock offers a lot of potential for wreaking havoc on your friends. Clever video windows present taunting messages that also liven up the action.

So how does Deadlock fare in the race to create the best strategic empire-building game? Bottom line—if you want a lot of depth and don't care about graphics, stick with Master of Orion until its successor, Battle of Antares, arrives later this year. But if you like quality graphics, network play, and decent artificial intelligence, and you're not interested in diplomacy or battle simulations, consider Deadlock. You won't be disappointed.

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Deadlock
Accolade
800-245-7744

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 4MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, Super VGA, mouse
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL:	B-

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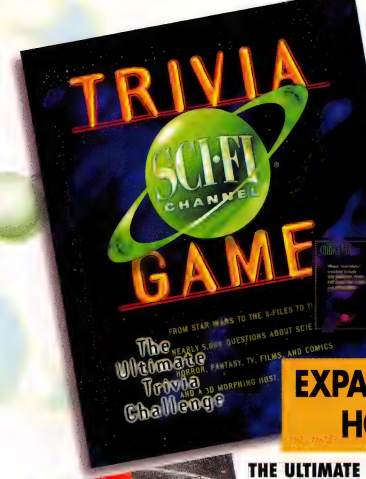
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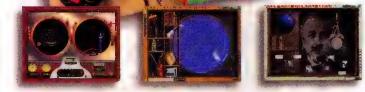

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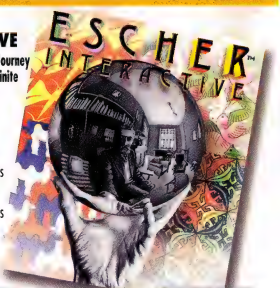

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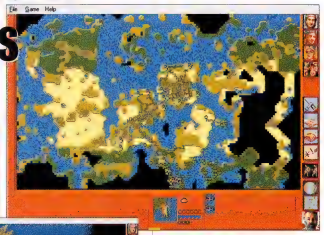
Nice game, but where's the AI?

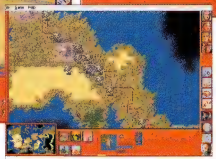
The Rise & Rule of Ancient Empires

By David Israels



Spread your empire far and wide—and customize it to your liking.

Each civilization has its own style of architecture.



Armies of cavalry give opponents a swift kick into the beyond.

It's only a coincidence that The Rise & Rule of Ancient Empires hit store shelves on the heels of Civilization II, but comparisons are inevitable. So let's be fair: Rise & Rule in no way tries to match the grand scope of Civ II. Instead, it focuses on a much more limited world—the empires built by six ancient cultures.

Gameplay is tried-and-true, turn-based strategy gaming. You start with a single settler unit. The game map is shrouded in darkness. After a bit of exploration, you order the hearty homesteader to found a first city. Now you're in the empire-building business. If you concentrate successfully on exploration, research, and conquest, your computer opponents (from one to three) will eventually bite the dust.

Besides the added value of network and modem play (supported only in Windows 95), Rise adds a few intriguing wrinkles to strategy gaming. For one, you're not limited to the role of conquering hero. You can take a more peaceful path, winning over opposing civilization's cities by getting merchants to set up lucrative trade routes. The game also makes clever use of six kinds of terrain. Cities settled in the forest, for instance, produce units with an affinity for their home ground. If tree-hugging armies spend too much time on the plains or in the desert, they starve to death.

Nice touch. But if Rise is ever going to win the hearts and wallets of game players, it'll need to be a lot more playable in single-player mode.

After spending some 30 hours playing Rise & Rule, it became obvious that the computer opponents were nearly brain dead. The empires they built were barely worthy of the name. Though trade is supposed to be a key part of the game, the computer never sent a single merchant my way. And when I brazenly went on the offensive, opposing armies simply sat around waiting for me to wipe them out. In a 150-turn game, I was attacked no more than half a dozen times. (The game's designer, Gregor Koomey, says a patch will improve the performance of computer opponents while squashing some minor game bugs.)

Rise is also plagued with sloppy attention to detail. Though the interface is easy to use—with lots of helpful pop-up balloons—it sometimes responds poorly. Clicking on units often causes them to run off in unintended directions. Also, the shallow diplomatic system doesn't seem to work properly. Sending a war message tends to elicit a non sequitur from the computer opponents.

Even worse, you can't hear some sound effects if you shut off the music—a problem Koomey blames on Windows.

In essence, The Rise & Rule of Ancient Empires fails just where Civilization II sparkles: elegant design, slick execution, and dedicated devotion to detail.

The Rise & Rule Of Ancient Empires

Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Developer: Impressions Software
Platform: Win 95/Win 3.1 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 95 or Win 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAMEPLAY:	D+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	C
OVERALL	D+

Sloppy execution and poor artificial intelligence keep Rise from ruling—at least as a single-player game.

TIPS

• Let philosopher units stay in their initial city for a turn or two to properly absorb the city's knowledge. • If you're on the warpath, concentrate on heavy cavalry units. They're strong and fast. • Win over other empires' cities by sending lots of merchants and stationing your troops around the targeted towns.

BUGS

Turning off the natural disaster option won't save you from falling prey to one. • The game tends to freeze when you run the Redbook audio music.

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Serf City gets a facelift

The Settlers II

By Peter Olafson

Nice scenery with incredible detail makes Settlers II a visual treat.

The little men are back, and they're better than ever. You'll remember The Settlers, even if you don't recall the name. If you played it, you can't help but remember it. SSI imported this exquisite "God" game from Germany's Blue Byte a few years back under the name Serf City: Life is Feudal. It was sort of a medieval ant farm—lots of lemming-sized animated men running around making plowshares and swords—and it was hopelessly addictive. And I mean still-up-at-5-a.m., call-in-sick, lost-week-end addictive.

Since then, Blue Byte has set up shop in the U.S. and created The Settlers II: Veni, Vidi, Vici. Simply put, it is everything Serf City was, and much, much, more.

Of course, there was nothing really wrong with the original game that an evening's worth of incessant play wouldn't make you forget, and, thank goodness, the core game hasn't been changed in any serious way. You're still building the material foundation of a petite animated empire, which includes things such as woodcutters, quarries, mines, and fisheries, and using your empire to force your opponent off the map.

The difference: Now you'll find four distinct Settler cultures, each with its own look (rather in the fashion of Lemmings II's tribes). There's also a new multi-chapter story, which effectively doubles as a tutorial. The ability to track multiple characters not under your immediate view on close-up screens is new, too, and so are the catapults. The developers have also cleaned up some of the oddities of the original, such as traffic jams at well-traveled intersections.

Each Settler culture has a unique look.

Your goal is still to wipe your opponent from the map.

Part of the game's appeal is simply visual: The game map is incredibly detailed. As before, everyone has a job and goes off and does it—not just in principle, but in animated fact. If your tiny blue-suited men are ill-used, you'll find them reading newspapers and jumping rope until someone gives them a chore. The woods are full of deer and rabbits. The leaves of every tree seem to be blowing in the wind, and each casts a shadow. Every flag is waving. The map is literally, fascinatingly, awash in tiny movement. This isn't just a game. It's a world, and once you've set it in motion, you may just want to sit back and watch it spin.

Not to say there isn't room for improvement. Some features that seemed pleasantly odd in Serf City are a little annoying the second time around. I wish the game was more forthcoming with information on things such as projected time-to-completion for a given building and what's holding up various supplies from being available. Combat remains a series of strange one-on-ones, and you can attack only military units (and industry indirectly). And the chesslike road-building can still be an exercise in frustration. The program will happily string a highway between two distant points, but it will sometimes forbid you to build one between two adjacent points.

But I'm picking nits. So, if you'll excuse me, The Settlers are calling. My world needs me.

TIPS

- **Start with the essentials and work up. Don't build a structure until you can supply everything it needs to operate.**
- **Don't always opt for a fight. Many times, just building a military building along a common border will earn you some territory and damage the enemy's infrastructure.**
- **Be cautious with your natural resources. Always build a forester building so your trees will be replaced, but watch that you don't place it so it fills in areas you have targeted for other buildings.**
- **Save your game before you demolish a military building. It may have a hard-to-predict influence on your borders.**

The Settlers II
Blue Byte Software
800-933-2983

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	A-

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TEEN T

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Not likely to inspire an all-nighter

The War College

By Barry Brenesal

Take control of historic battles.

With store shelves becoming more and more crowded with strategic war games, how can a traditional computerized war simulation stand out from the crowd? Despite some interesting features, The War College doesn't have the answer.

This military simulation focuses on four classic historical battles: Pharsalus, the turning point in the Roman Civil War; Austerlitz, where Napoleon snatched victory from defeat; Antietam, an American Civil War battle of endless lost opportunities; and Tannenberg, where large Russian forces were crushed by inferior German forces in WWI. You can play either side against the computer or a human opponent, reconfigure various military conditions, and read online background information on each battle.

One way War College differs from standard war games is its lack of hex-based movement. Instead, complex algorithms examine 3-D terrain, unit types, morale, and nationality as your troops move across the landscape. The game's ability to distinguish among degrees of flanking fire and wheeling movements is just as impressive.

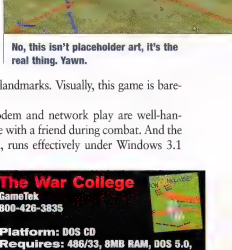
But while The War College deserves credit for its movement and combat algorithms, it leaves out other equally important factors affecting battle—weather and supply line efficiency are two of the bigger examples. It also lacks attention to detail in the command style of key subordinates: Cavalry led by bold Confederate Civil War general Jeb Stuart shouldn't follow a series of cautious defensive directives, but they will in War College. And what of the additional risks and morale benefits that should be connected to high-ranking officers who encourage their troops in person on the front lines of the battlefield? That kind of thing doesn't make the syllabus in The War College.

Nicolas Charles Oudinot (1767–1847) held the dubious record of being the most wounded (at least 22 times) Marshal in Napoleon's army. He retired from the royalist army, a sergeant in 1787 but returned in 1792, elected a lieutenant-colonel in a republican regiment. By 1799 he had risen to general de division and was given the command of the elite grenadier division before Austerlitz. He was elevated to the rank of Marshal in 1809. He was wounded twice during the Russian campaign and three times during the 1813–14 campaign. He did not, however, rejoin Napoleon during the Waterloo campaign and remained loyal to the Bourbons who rewarded him by making him commander of the Royal Guard.

Background info is handsome and abundant.

Troop options are usually limited to a single movement and one offensive and one defensive formation for each unit. You can't order an all-out attack to rout a wavering enemy, or signal defend-and-hold vs. defend-and-retreat. There's no forage command, and no ability to send scouts out to reconnoiter territory. The "fog of battle" that once affected entire divisions in close proximity is limited to a toggle switch based solely on visual contact.

Although The War College's online background materials and artwork are handsome, the actual game graphics just don't cut it. Armies are depicted in standard war-mapping fashion as lines of contrasting blue and red on an isometric background of featureless 3-D terrain. True, you get three levels of zoom, but they just give you somewhat larger blue and red lines. Don't expect stylized icons, colorful menus, or local landmarks. Visually, this game is barebones all the way.



No, this isn't placeholder art, it's the real thing. Yawn.

On the plus side, modem and network play are well-handled. You can chat online with a friend during combat. And the game, while DOS-based, runs effectively under Windows 3.1 and Windows 95, and has logical keyboard commands.

Had the rest of The War College equaled the detailed simulation of its movement algorithms, armchair commanders would have been happily strategizing all through the long summer months. But this simulation's sum doesn't live up to the promise of its parts.

TIPS

- **Cavalry can provide a supreme advantage when it comes to misleading enemy units and attacking foes from the rear.**
- **Given the all-offensive/all-defensive options for military units (and nothing in between), surround-and-destroy can work wonders.**
- **Avoid firing at enemy units if they're only slightly in view. Instead, wheel. Face the enemy head-on to minimize flanking fire.**
- **Don't fire from a distance. There are no reinforcements or additional supplies during battle, so you'll want to save your ammunition. When your musketry units run out of ammo they're reduced to melee, and when your artillery runs out of ammo, they're reduced to neat flower pots in the town squares of future generations.**

The War College
GameTek
800-426-3835

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $40–$50

GAME PLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	D
SOUND CHECK:	C
OVERALL	C-

Dated visuals and limited options obscure this strategic war sim's sophisticated combat and movement algorithms.

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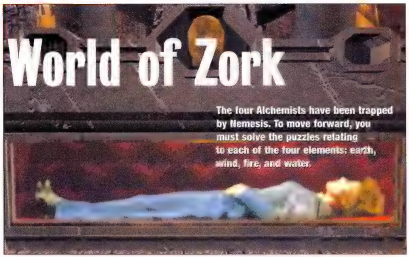
Exploring the World of Zork

By Shane Mooney



The four Alchemists have been trapped by Nemesis. To move forward, you must solve the puzzles relating to each of the four elements: earth, wind, fire, and water.

Few adventure games offer the high-quality, immersive graphics and sounds of Zork: Nemesis. Even fewer deliver its brand of challenging puzzles, some of which stretch your cranium to the bursting point. Luckily, we've got just what you need. The following prescriptions should help ease the pain and get you going.

The Temple

If you're having trouble getting past the first puzzle, don't worry—you're not a complete moron. Getting into the temple at the very start of the game can be tough even for seasoned adventurers. The key lies in the clue above the door, which reads, "When the sun and moon are joined the gates to eternity are opened." If you look at the door, you'll notice that the knocker itself is a crescent moon, and above it is a sun. Most people just click on the knocker, which makes it bang on the door a few times with no results. You need to click on the moon while holding down the mouse button and lift the knocker up to meet the sun. The doors will open and you'll be ready for the following puzzles.

These candles may look the same, but sometimes a mirror can reveal unseen truths.

Candle Room

At first it doesn't look like you can do much of anything. Clicking on the various candles seems to produce no results. The trick is finding the right candle. You need to hang the mirror in this room from the first hook to your left. This will reveal a candle behind you that's not like the others. Turn around and click on that candle, and you will have solved the Fire Puzzle. One element down, three to go.

Air Path

In your quest to solve the Air Path of the four elements, you'll come across a room with a large gas globe. Around the globe sit different-colored wheels. The one you want is the one directly behind the globe. After clicking on the beetle to dim the lighting, go back around to the front. Move handle two to half-full and handles three and four to full to solve the puzzle.

Water Path

To solve the Water Path, you must get through the spinning-hourglass-chair puzzle. After sitting in the chair and facing the rear window, you need to spin two full rotations to the left. Move forward, pick up the saw, and get back in the chair. Now spin around to the left three more times, move forward, and cut the icicle. Don't do anything else—just get back in the chair. Now spin to the right two times, move forward, and quickly click on the melted icicle in the bowl to solve the puzzle.

The hourglass-chair puzzle can have you spinning in circles till you learn how to free the Water Alchemist.

Earth Element

One of the trickier puzzles involves finding the earth element. Eight bony fingers bar your path through a locked door. If you looked in Nemesis' lab, you would have found the two symbols representing earth on a scroll. You need to lift the two fingers with the earth symbols to solve the puzzle. Going from left to right, you want to lift finger one on the left hand and finger two on the right. Go through the door and find the mine cart. Press the button on the upper right of the panel next to the cart and then get into it. After a hair-raising ride, you'll have acquired the earth element, temporarily freed the four Alchemists, and received a golden globe.

To free the Air Alchemist, you must solve the gas globe puzzle.

Now the fun really begins. Good luck!

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Duke Nukem 3D

By Steve Klett

Duke Nukem is one tough hombre. He's big, he's cool, he's fearless, and he has an awesome array of weaponry with which to wreak havoc on those damn aliens. When you get right down to it, though, Duke's fighting some incredibly long odds, even for him. Using the right weapon at the right time can help tip the odds in his favor.

In the retail version of the game, Duke's got 10 weapons to choose from, and it can be tempting to use the more powerful ones all the time. But using the Freezethrower and Rocket-Propelled Grenade (RPG) launcher in close-quarters combat is generally not a good idea unless you like turning yourself into a popsicle or blowing yourself to bits. Here's a rundown of which weapon to use when:

If you can't beat the aliens, you can always cheat. If you must, type the following during the game:
DNSTUFF: All weapons, powerups, and keycards
DNSCOTTY + episode number + level number (01, 02...): Warps you to any level in the game
DNCORNHOLIO: God mode
DNUNLOCK: Opens all doors in a level
DNENDING: Takes you to the end of the game
DNHYPER: Gives you steroids
DNWEAPONS: Gives you all the weapons

The RPG

Save the Rocket-Propelled Grenade launcher for blasting groups of enemies and the bosses at the end of each episode. Also use it to take out gun turrets at long range (the rockets home in on the closest target when fired).

The Devastator

Because of its high rate of fire, this impressive weapon is also useful for taking out several enemies at once. But its rockets are too weak to be the best choice for destroying bosses.

Its punch is a bit weak, but the Devastator can peg two baddies at the same time.

The Shotgun

This is your best all-around weapon when fighting in confined areas such as small rooms and hallways, which form the bulk of the game. The Shotgun packs one helluva punch when fired at close range and can take out most of the game's enemies with a maximum of two well-placed shots (in head-to-head mode, one Shotgun blast can take out a human player at 100 health). The Chaingun is also good in close quarters, but it doesn't pack as big a punch. Unless you have a deathwish, or you've got no other choice, don't try either of these weapons against bosses.

The Shrinker

Use this unique weapon to nail a bunch of baddies in a room, and then stomp them. The Shrinker's got a slow rate of fire, so don't try to peg distant enemies with it—conserve your ammo! Also, because it can shrink a player with full health and armor down to stomping size with a single shot, the Shrinker makes a terrific sniping weapon for deathmatches. Mind you, the practice of sniping—hiding in a dark corner somewhere waiting for another player to amble by—is extremely cowardly and without honor. But it can be amusing.

The Freezethrower

It's incredibly fun, but the Freezethrower's one of the hardest weapons to master. Reserve it for use against single enemies in areas with a lot of room (to avoid freezing yourself with ricochets). In deathmatches, use it to chase down fleeing players, stop them in their tracks, and then shatter them with your mighty boot or any other weapon.

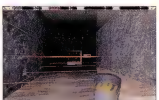
The Pistol

Don't forget your Pistol! It's easily the most underrated and underused weapon in the game. Able to hit individual targets at extremely long range—with considerable power—it is an ideal choice when fighting in wide-open areas (particularly in deathmatches).

Pipebombs and Laser Tripbombs

As noted in our review on page 44, Pipebombs are extremely useful for clearing small rooms of enemies without exposing yourself to fire. Simply run to a doorway, throw in a Pipebomb, back up, trigger it, and then listen for the screams of eviscerated aliens. Pipebombs are also an excellent means of clearing Tripbombs out of rooms and hallways.

The laser-activated Tripbombs aren't very useful in the standalone game, but in conjunction with Pipebombs in deathmatches, they can set quite an effective trap (assuming you can find enough time to get everything ready). Place several Tripbombs so that they crisscross in a room where players go to power up, toss some Pipebombs on the floor next to the Tripbombs, and then find a safe, dark corner from which to spring your ambush. When another player enters the room, you can either set it off yourself by triggering the Pipebombs or wait for the player to hit one of the Tripbombs. Either way, the resulting explosion can be most spectacular.



Use a Pipebomb to clear a room of Tripbombs. Just make sure you're far away before you set it off.

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Assault Rigs

Shoot. Spin. Pivot. Fire!!! It's all you can do to keep on fighting and keep on living. Here's a little help from the Tank Gods.

• For invulnerability, press left, fire, left, fire, left, left, fire, right, fire, right, fire, fire. You'll get the message "Invincible! Yes indeedy."

• To access all weapons, press left, right, left, left, right, left, right, right, up, down, up, up, down, up, down, down. You'll get the message "Max weapons added....Oh yes."

• Level codes: The password for each level is a six-digit combination of the digits 1, 2, 3, and 4. Here are the codes for the last 10 levels:

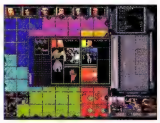
33. Firepower	113112	38. Bounce	413323
34. Wave	142442	39. The Castle	232321
35. Push Off	431313	40. Fortress	213113
36. Perimeter	133112	41. Lifts Ahoy	313421
37. Spiral	133132	42. Push Me	413432

These cheats work in single-player *and* multiplayer games.

Chaos Overlords

You want to seize control, you gotta be ruthless. Here're some weapons that'll let you crush the life out of rival gangs.

• When asked to type in your name before a one-player game, type one of these cheats instead:



SMGHUBBLE See every gang in every sector

SMGKICKASS Five ground zeroes, fully equipped

SMGMILK Every hire is fully healed

Havoc

For a blast-the-hell-out-of-everything-'cause-I'm-the-demented-ultra-violent-type experience, try these carnage-wreaking codes.

• To use the following cheats, hit the Tab key and then type:

AAA Full Ammo

SSS Full Shields

MMM Heatseeker Launcher

VVV Extra Vehicle

• To Jump Levels:

(1) Go to the Pick Your Vehicle screen

(2) Type CHEAT

(3) Type the world level (1–6)

(4) Type the level number (1–5, where 3 is a bonus level and 5 is a boss level)

FIFA 96

Try these secret teams and modes and you'll be king of the soccer field.

• **To enable Special Teams:**

(1) Hit the QUIT TO DOS button in the game select screen.

(2) While the credit video is playing, type XPLAY and hit return.

This will take you straight to the Friendly Game menu with a new set of five extra teams—the All Nighters, As Designed, Strontium 90, The Gimps, and The Rod Benders—called the EA Superstars. Some of the players in these teams have special abilities.

• **To enable Enhanced Play Modes:**

(1) Go to the Friendly Team select menu.

(2) For the team on the left choose Vancouver in the USA League.

(3) For the team on the right choose Canada in the International League.

(4) Press Ctrl-Alt-Insert.

This will bring up an Enhanced Play Modes menu with options to change various game attributes. Once activated, the menu can be brought up again by pressing the F1 key.

Enhanced Play Modes:

BALL SIZE: Normal–Big–Bigger–Biggest

BALL PERSONALITY: Normal–Curve Ball–Crazy Ball

INVISIBLE WALLS: Disabled–Enabled

TEAM A/B:

SIZE: Normal–Big Player–Big Team

JERSEY: Normal–Beefcake–Suspenders–Muscle Shirt–Invisible Man

GOALIE: Normal–Lame

PLAYERS: Normal–Super Goalie–Super Defense–Super Offense–Super Team

SHOTS: Normal–Super

The Hive

Hunting Hivasects isn't easy. You've got your ship, your reflexes, but even those may not be enough. So here's some help.

• To gain access to each level, type TORYO at the startup screen.

NBA Live '96

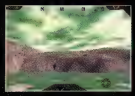
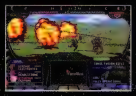
Tired of Shaq, Penny, and Hakeem? How about some new superstars?

• For some secret players, go to Create Player and type in one of the names of the game's programmers. They're listed in the back of the manual and in the game's credits screen.

Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Send your questions to *PC Games*, Attn: Strategy & Tactics, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; e-mail: ccohen@iftw.com.

Compiled by Corey Cohen

Time To Kick Ass

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By Steve Klett

Play Network Games at Home

With hot games such as Doom II, Duke Nukem 3D, Warcraft II, and Command & Conquer offering such excellent ways to frag your friends, it's no wonder multiplayer network gaming is the buzzword of the moment in the gaming community.

However, not all gamers actually have access to networks to play games on. Without the use of a local-area network—usually at the office and occasionally at the risk of your job—you have to settle for playing head-to-head with a buddy over a modem or serial connection. While head-to-head play can be a blast, it simply can't compare to the joyful mayhem of true multiplayer action involving three or more people at once.

Trying to duplicate the office network at home isn't easy. You could try to get your friends to invest in network adapters, cabling, maybe even a small network concentrator (hub), and perhaps a textbook or two on network protocols. Then, of course, you get to deal with such pleasantries as I/O addresses, interrupts, and internal card hardware conflicts—all harder than your typical adventure game, and all a lot less fun. Win 95's Plug-and-Play capabilities simplify the process somewhat, but it's still no cup of tea.

Wouldn't it be nice if there was a simple way to daisy-chain a bunch of computers into a home network? A solution that didn't require internal adaptor cards, network expertise, or deep pockets? Well, believe it or not, there is.

Apexx Technology in Boise, Idaho, has come up with a networking kit aimed specifically at multiplayer gaming enthusiasts. Called GameLAN, the kit is designed to be as simple to set up and start playing over as possible. After spending several days setting up (and playing with) a network of four PCs with GameLAN, I can say that while it's still no piece of cake, it is a far more user-friendly way to establish a network than any of your other options.

The $149 GameLAN Starter Kit has everything you need to network two PCs: two external GameLAN adapters, 25 feet of standard RJ-11 phone cable, and a CD-ROM with all the necessary network drivers, plus the shareware versions of Warcraft II, Doom, Heretic, Hexen, and Duke Nukem 3D. The included manual provides comprehensive, easy-to-understand instructions for launching network games in DOS, Windows, and Win 95.

If you want a bigger network, you'll need a $79 GameLAN Add-On Kit, which includes a GameLAN adapter, 25 feet of RJ-11 cable, and a diskette with the necessary network drivers for each additional computer.

GameLAN gives you everything you need to start a home network.

According to Apexx, up to a dozen PCs can be linked into a GameLAN net.

So, for just over $300 you can set up a four-player network. That may not seem like an incredible deal, as low-end network adapter cards cost about $75 these days. But remember, GameLAN also includes all the other parts you need—such as cabling—plus games.

More importantly, GameLAN is extremely easy to set up. You just plug a GameLAN adapter into the parallel (printer) port on each PC, and then connect each adapter with the telephone cable.

Next, you use the GameLAN Starter Kit CD-ROM to install the games you want to play and the GameLAN network driver software, which essentially emulates a DOS IPX network (the standard network protocol supported in multiplayer DOS games). This process will probably take you a grand total of about 10 minutes per PC. So far, so good.

If you're installing GameLAN on a Windows 95 machine, at this point, the installation routine takes you through Win 95's new hardware/network-configuration setup procedures. These will create a new boot sequence for your PC that automatically loads needed network drivers, installs the GameLAN adapter and protocol software, and sets up a network log-on and password for each computer.

It may sound complicated, but the GameLAN documentation provides step-by-step instructions for the process, which made installing GameLAN a breeze on the first three PCs I tried. Then came PC number four, which for some reason could not locate the GameLAN adapter driver software on the CD-ROM. So I tried another PC. Same problem. A call to Apexx brought helpful, friendly advice, but no answers. The most popular theory was that the GameLAN installation routine was having trouble recognizing the 6X CD-ROM drives in our

machines (a problem that is cropping up more and more these days).

Mix and Match

Seeing as *PC Games* was fresh out of available PCs, a workaround was needed. No problem. As it turns out, GameLAN can support any combination of PCs with Win 95, Windows For Workgroups, or DOS. So I just needed to quit to DOS on the problem PC, load the GameLAN DOS drivers off the floppy that comes with the Add-On Kits, and my problem was solved. I was then able to get a four-player Duke Nukem deathmatch going with three of the PCs launching the game from Win 95 and the fourth launching from DOS.

At this point, however, it was clear that performance was going to be an issue on my new GameLAN network. With four players, the frame-rate in Duke can slow to virtually unplayable levels, even with all the PCs running the game in DOS. (Each PC had at least a 90MHz Pentium processor and 16MB of RAM.) This problem was especially acute with the larger levels in the shareware version of Duke; the first two levels ran with acceptable performance pretty reliably. With just three players, there was little discernible performance degradation.

Other games, such as Assault Rigs and Heretic: Shadow of the Serpent Riders (see review, page 50), ran relatively smoothly with up to four players. Yet, for all the games we tried, it was sometimes necessary to quit a game in progress and restart because of poor performance. (These problems also occur on real IPX-based client/server networks, but usually not as frequently, and supporting four players adequately is typically not a problem.)

No Special Support Required

Regardless, GameLAN's relatively low price and simple configuration may overcome its quirky performance issues for many aspiring home networkers. And because GameLAN emulates a DOS IPX network, you can run any DOS-based multiplayer game that supports Novell Netware's IPX protocol, which, as previously mentioned, is a standard in the game industry. So game developers do not need to write special drivers for their games to make them work over GameLAN.

GameLAN makes an ideal game network in a college dorm, where you might have lots of students with PCs close to each other.

But even if you only want to network two PCs in the same room, GameLAN is a worthwhile alternative to a serial cable. Not all games that support multiple players work over a serial connection. Plus, getting a game to run over a serial connection can seem like an exercise in quantum physics at times, forcing you to worry about things like COM ports and port addresses. GameLAN really makes it as easy as launching a game and selecting network play. There's basically no need to worry about software or hardware settings once GameLAN's installed.

It's also worth noting that you can use GameLAN for things other than playing the latest network games. GameLAN supports the peer-to-peer networking capabilities that are built into Windows For Workgroups and Win 95, which allow such things as file and print sharing, e-mail, and remote access. (Yawn.)

If you're looking for a quick and simple way to set up a network to play games with a few of your friends, GameLAN may not be perfect, but it's the best option around. ■

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By David Gerding

Listen Up: The Truth About 3-D Audio

We are predominantly visual creatures. Our eyes are front and center, and the majority of the sensory parts of our brain process visual information. Our ears, on the other hand, are tucked discreetly on the sides of our head—out of sight and out of mind.

On the PC, audio technology also plays second fiddle to slick, 3-D graphics. In fact, PC sound has pretty much stagnated since sound card–makers finally managed to deliver audio that matched the fidelity of our CD players back in 1993.

In the last year, however, sound card marketers have tried to stir things up by offering "3-D audio" technology. The ads promise three-dimensional sounds worthy of modern 3-D graphics: You'll be able to *hear* the shuffling of that demon sneaking up *behind you* in Doom. Sounds cool, huh? Unfortunately, the reality doesn't yet live up to the promise.

VVVVRRROOOO

Creative Labs' AWE32, which tricks your ears into hearing dimensional or position information with just two speakers *and* has the needed processing power to do it in real time, so sounds can move around in relation to the game you're playing.

Creative Labs and other sound card designers achieve this effect by playing with the delay between the two speakers. They use techniques called "psychoacoustics," which subtly color the sound in each channel to match the "Doppler shift" that alters the pitch of sounds as they move toward or away from you. Psychoacoustics can even change the sound based on the way it interacts with your head before it reaches your ear.

Unfortunately, most game developers haven't yet taken advantage of the proprietary programming tools from companies like Creative Labs and QSound that can add this kind of information to your audio in real time. That's partly because the necessary processing steals a lot of CPU power if it's done in software, and developers figure that most gamers would rather have their computers spend that power on better graphics than on audio that swings around their head.

Microsoft's DirectSound

This situation may soon change. Late this fall Microsoft plans to roll out an extension to the Windows 95 DirectSound programming tools that will let game developers specify where in a three-dimensional space a sound is coming from. If you haven't made the move to Windows 95, technologies like DirectSound will probably seal the deal. DirectSound will only be supported on Windows 95, and later on Windows NT.

Once the 3D-enhanced DirectSound tools are ready, watch out. If you have Spatializer hardware or a Creative Labs' AWE32 sound card, you'll get hardware-accelerated processing of the position information. If you don't, your computer will still have to do some additional processing of the audio to help add depth or position information to the sound.

Microsoft's common software platform means that the 3-D audio competition will heat up as early as Christmas. Sound card and speaker companies will vie to deliver the most compelling positional or "interactive 3-D" audio possible. Eventually, true multichannel (more than two) techniques such as Dolby Digital (also known as AC-3) will migrate from movie theaters to home theaters to your computer. While you're waiting, check our "Cheap Tricks" sidebar to make the most of your current sound situation. ■

The 3-D Sound Rundown

Remember, even though they all say "3-D," most of these technologies do little more than enhance or add perceived depth to your audio. Only Dolby Surround does more (by using more speakers), but it requires game developers to encode Dolby Surround information into the audio signal. Be sure to listen to any board or add-on to decide for yourself if the "enhanced" audio is worth your money.

Binaura

This audio-enhancing circuit is used by the sound cards in Diamond Multimedia's upgrade kits and Creative Labs' low-end Sound Blaster 32PnP, among others. The company promises a new hardware solution for true positional audio this fall.

Creative Labs

Creative has modest stereo-separation circuitry, or "enhancement" circuits, in all its advanced boards. And Creative's high-end AWE32 board has an EMU-8000 music processing chip that's capable of real-time positional audio processing. But you'll probably have to wait until Christmas and the next version of Microsoft's DirectSound technology for the first Windows 95 games that take advantage of the chip's potential.

Dolby Surround

The closest thing to a true 3-D audio solution for the PC right now is Altec Lansing's ACS-500 speakers, the only ones with Dolby Surround. The two beautifully sculpted speakers use multiple angled drivers to bounce audio off the walls, making some sounds seem to come from behind you. For true real-time positional audio, however, you'll have to wait until you can pair these speakers with the next generation of 3-D sound hardware.

QSound

An impressive-sounding software-based solution that can be decoded by AWE32 cards. QSound is also working on a software toolkit for game developers that is intended to compete with Microsoft's upcoming DirectSound standard.

Sound Retrieval System (SRS)

As suggested by the name, SRS is an enhancement circuit that, among other things, improves audio imaging by recapturing stereo separation. SRS can be found in add-on products like NuReality's Vivid 3D units (approximately $40–$50).

Spatializer

An enhancement circuit found in add-on products such as Labtec's Imager ($39.99). Spatializer makes a high-end product (HTMS 2510, $230) for home theater setups that may be worth the investment if you've already moved your PC into the living room and have a multichannel surround setup. The results are impressive. Working with any signal hooked up to your receiver, the unit fills in the gaps between the multiple speakers with a rich, immersive sound field. Spatializer says that its existing hardware will help implement a real-time positional audio software solution that the company hopes to have ready by fall.

DirectSound

The first generation of DirectSound, which will appear this summer as part of Microsoft's DirectX game-development tools, won't support 3-D audio. What DirectSound will do is support multichannel mixing of digital audio as abstract function calls. That's significant mainly because it gives sound card manufacturers something new to fight about in terms of features. As each company tries to support more mixing channels in hardware, you'll get faster, cooler-sounding games. Just don't count on titles that take advantage of the forthcoming 3-D extensions to DirectSound to appear before spring 1997.

Cheap Tricks: Five Ways to Add Dimension to Your Sound

Trick 1: You want as few physical obstacles as possible between you and your audio. If your speakers are set back on your desk, pull them forward so the monitor doesn't block their sound. If you can, raise them to the same height as your head. Speakers mounted on a monitor are theoretically in the best position to deliver the optimal stereo effect.

Trick 2: If you need to move the speakers far apart to clear the monitor, try turning them slightly inward, so they point toward you. Adjust the angle for the best sound.

Trick 3: Turn it up! Subtle depth and position information can get lost in background noise. Just don't twist the knob so far that the audio quality degrades.

Trick 4: Try using headphones. Some audio enhancers sound better with the channels of audio totally separated; others don't. Unfortunately, there's no hard and fast rule here, because the results are subjective.

Trick 5: Upgrade your speakers. High-quality speakers emit a broader range of frequencies, which do much more than convey pitch. Your brain also uses this information to help establish depth.

Hardware Spotlight

SIMPLE AND POWERFUL

NEC Ready 9618

Rating: B+

It was with more than a little trepidation that I approached NEC's latest addition to its Ready line of multimedia computers. But unlike some earlier models, the **NEC Ready 9618** lived up to the expectations set by its impressive componentry.

The 9618 features a blazing 150MHz Pentium processor, an adequate 16MB of EDO RAM (upgradable to 128MB), a cavernous 2GB hard drive, a speedy 6X CD-ROM drive, a 64-bit PCI local bus graphics card with 1MB of video DRAM, software-based full-motion-video playback (MPEG) upgradable to 2MB, 256KB of cache memory, a 28.8Kbps modem, a pair of 40-watt stereo speakers, a microphone, and the ubiquitous integrated telephone center with voicemail and speakerphone. Whew! And if that's not enough, NEC throws in an infrared sensor and a hand-held remote control.

So far, so good, but what about the software bundle? In addition to Windows 95, the 9618 comes with more than 20 programs, ranging from such practical applications as Microsoft's Works, Encarta, Publisher, and Money to edutainment titles such as Living Books' Dr. Seuss's ABCs and Big Top's Hello Kitty. NEC includes just two games, but they're keepers: Papyrus' popular NASCAR Racing and EA/Bullfrog's top-notch Magic Carpet Plus (the original Magic Carpet with additional expert levels). America Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe software is also thrown in, as is Netscape Navigator, for the Web surfer in you.

Of course, what really matters isn't the programs a PC comes with, but how well it runs your favorite games. Happily, the Ready 9618 performs admirably. Resource-intensive titles such as EA/Origin's Advanced Tactical Fighters, Sierra's EarthSiege 2, Activision's MechWarrior 2, and Looking Glass's Terra Nova ran perfectly. Better yet, we encountered very few configuration problems installing DOS or Win 95–native games—something that can't be said for some previous Ready systems (see review of the Ready 9542, *PC Entertainment*, January 1996, page 135).

You won't have any trouble getting started, either. Newcomers will appreciate the 9618's easy setup. A handy "how-to" poster, along with labeled cords and connections, makes it a snap to put the system together. However, you will have to step through Windows 95's 20-minute setup process before you can start using the computer. PCs from many other vendors come with Win 95 preloaded and already set up for you.

On the other hand, NEC's video-based Merlin software is a significant improvement over the standard online help and less-than-thrilling tutorials found on most PCs. (Experienced PC users will want to turn Merlin off immediately.)

The 9618's only downer is its adequate but unimpressive speaker system. Its $2,499 price tag is about average for a high-end system of this caliber, and adding a top-notch 17-inch NEC monitor will set you back another $699 (for a total of $3,098). But if you're looking for brand-name quality with lots of bells and whistles, the 9618 is a solid choice. (NEC; 800-632-4636; $2,499 without monitor) —*Steve Klett*

A WEDGE OF SOUND

Multimedia Labs' TC 1500 Speakers

Rating: B+

Snap, crackle, pop. With apologies to Kellogg's, these qualities are even more important in multimedia speakers than in Rice Krispies. Fortunately for audio-oriented gamers, **Multimedia Labs' TC 1500** speakers have a reasonable amount of all three.

The TC 1500s come with Multimedia Labs' separate Book-Amp amplifier, and the whole package is designed to fit in a small footprint. The wedge-shaped speakers butt up nicely against your computer, with the woofers flared out from the side. The notebook-size amplifier pumps out 75 solid watts, with easily accessible front controls for bass, treble, balance, and microphone gain. Each control notches at the midpoint, a subtle but welcome feature. You also control volume easily at the front via a single button. An LED ladder meter—like the kind found on most tape decks—tells you when you've pushed

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WENDROD A. CLARK

your volume into the distortion zone, which is prone to happen when you crank the bass too high.

The trick with these speakers is to avoid overcompensating with more bass, as the response is not overly defined (a $99 add-on subwoofer does help matters). It'll only be a problem when you've got music running in your computer, though, and it's not a critical hassle; our test of Toad the Wet Sprocket's *Dulcinea* sounded quite decent. For games, the sound definition is just fine—especially given the manageable $129 price tag. (Multimedia Labs; 800-484-5159 ext 5227; $129.95)

—Donald St. John

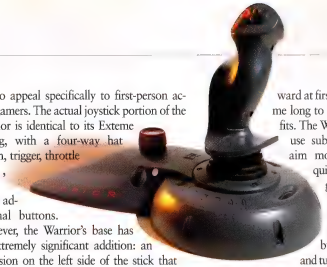
SPINNIN' AND SMILIN'

WingMan Warrior

Rating: A-

I've never been a fan of using joysticks for first-person action games such as Doom, Dark Forces, or Duke Nukem 3D. I didn't think a joystick—no matter how many buttons it had or how much it cost—could match the level of control provided by the keyboard. But Logitech's WingMan Warrior has changed my mind.

The Warrior is a variation of Logitech's high-end WingMan Extreme joystick, modified to appeal specifically to first-person action gamers. The actual joystick portion of the Warrior is identical to its Extreme sibling, with a four-way hat switch, trigger, throttle dial, and three additional buttons. However, the Warrior's base has an extremely significant addition: an extension on the left side of the stick that houses a dial.



So what, you say? Well, this dial lets you pan your view a full 360 degrees simply by spinning it. Basically, this dial—together with the Warrior's basic joystick functions—lets you easily control just about every vital function in an action game.

With Duke Nukem 3D, for example, forward and backward movement is controlled by pushing or pulling the joystick forward or backward—the harder you push or pull, the faster you move. Moving the stick side to side lets you strafe to the left or right. The hat controls up and down aim as well as crouching and strafing. The trigger, of course, fires, and the Warrior's three additional buttons open doors and cycle through inventory and weapons. The dial controls your directional movement, which in Duke (and Doom and Dark Forces) is also your aim.

This unique control scheme seemed awkward at first, but it didn't take me long to recognize its benefits. The Warrior's dial let me use subtle movements to aim more precisely, and quickly spin 180 degrees to instantly react to enemies behind me. It also made it easy to burst into a room and turn and fire at an enemy in a corner—without ever stopping. And the lateral strafing control on the stick made it much easier to dodge enemy fire more adeptly.

Of course, you don't get to use all the cool stuff with every game on the market. As with any new peripheral, a game needs special drivers to enable all of its functionality. Logitech ships the Warrior with drivers for Doom II, Dark Forces, Hexen, Heretic, and Duke Nukem 3D (what others do you really need?), and more support will come with the release of new first-person action games. Other joystick-makers, including CH Products, have similar sticks on the way, and industrywide support is sure to follow.

At almost $100, the WingMan Warrior is admittedly a bit pricey. But remember, it's also a first-rate conventional joystick for your favorite flight sims. (Logitech; 800-231-7717; street price $99)

—Steve Klett

Gaming Hardware Hall of Fame

Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy. Just check *PC Games*' running list of our top hardware recommendations. Each month, we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

Category	Product	Details	Our Rating
PC	Packard Bell Platinum Pro 166	Packard Bell; 800-733-5858; $3,299	A-
Monitor	Nokia Valugraph 447L	Nokia; 800-296-6542; $699	B+
CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	B+
Sound card	AWE32 PnP	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $24.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; $219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; $69.95	A+
Gamepad	GrIP system	Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558; $99.95	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; $219 internal, $299 external	A
Graphics card	Diamond Stealth 64	Diamond Multimedia; 800-468-5846; $229	A-
Add-on of the Month	WingMan Warrior	Logitech; 800-231-7717; street price $99	A-

By Patrick Marshall

S.O.S.

Finding fault with Civ II, solving sound board conflicts, and playing audio CDs in your computer.

The End of Civilization

I just bought MicroProse's Civilization II. While I like the game, I'm getting irritated by repeated general protection faults. I've checked the documentation, but I can't figure out what's wrong. Any ideas?

Bob Thomas
Los Angeles, CA

According to MicroProse, there are five things you should check:

(1) Do you have a sound card installed? The first copies of Civilization II that shipped wouldn't work properly without a sound card. If that's your problem, you can download a patched copy of the game from MicroProse's BBS (510-522-8909), Web site (http://www.microprose.com), or CompuServe forum (go Gamebpub).

(2) Do you have enough global memory? MicroProse recommends you set the virtual memory swap file size to 32MB or more if you're using Windows 3.1. To do so, go into the Control Panel and click the Enhanced icon. Select Virtual Memory, then Change.

Windows 95 handles this process automatically, though you'll still need to make sure you've got enough free disk space.

(3) Are you using a Diamond or Cirrus Logic graphics adapter? If so, make sure you've got the latest drivers.

(4) Does the GPF message refer to WING.DLL? According to MicroProse, that means you're probably using a RAM-doubling program on your computer. You'll have to disable it before starting Civilization II. CD-ROM accelerator programs can also cause problems, so you should disable those, too.

(5) As a last-ditch effort, try deleting the GET_INFO.EXE file from the game's directory.

Who's Responsible?

I recently bought a 486 computer, and the sound card—a MediaVision ProAudio Spectrum—doesn't want to let go when I exit Windows. It just keeps playing the .WAV file associated with exiting over and over again until I finally switch off the system. Additionally, applications will just up and freeze while I'm working on them. The place I bought the computer at exchanged it for another one, but I'm still having the same problems. Any suggestions?

J. George
via CompuServe

The cause of your problem is almost certainly a memory or interrupt (IRQ) conflict between your sound card and another piece of hardware on the system. The first issue to resolve is who should be getting the headache: you or the company that sold you the computer.

If you bought the computer with the sound card already installed and you haven't added any new hardware, it's up to the store that sold it to you to make sure it's functioning properly. Take it back, and instead of letting them give you another one, have them make sure it works the way it's supposed to.

If you have added a single piece of hardware, the first thing you should do is take the new device out and see if the computer works properly. If it does, check the documentation that came with that hardware and see if you can change its memory and/or interrupt settings.

If you've added a number of devices, making it tough to find the culprit, try the following:

(1) Remove all hardware except for your drive controller card and your video card.

(2) Remark (REM) all the drivers in your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files except those that refer to the sound card.

(3) See if your sound board works. If it does, install the drivers (and their respective hardware) one at a time until you find the conflict. If the board doesn't work, the conflict is probably with your graphics adapter.

(4) Once you've located the two devices that are in conflict, you can change the settings of one or the other to resolve the conflict.

(5) Alternatively, you can use a diagnostics program to determine free memory, IRQ, and DMA (direct memory access) settings, then try changing the settings on your sound card to use the open locations. If you're using Windows 3.1, you can call up the DOS-based MSD program, located in the Windows directory. If you're using Windows 95, just open the Systems utility in the Control Panel and double-click on the Computer icon. You'll see a full listing of resources.

Music to Your Ears

I've used friends' computers and played music CDs in their CD-ROM drives, and the music came from the computer speakers. At home, I have to use the headphone jack on my CD-ROM drive to listen to music. I can live with that, but is there a way to hook the drive to the sound card? I have an 8-bit Sound Blaster and a single-speed Magnavox CD-ROM drive.

If I need a drive or card upgrade, tell me what to do after the upgrade.

Derek Hassel
Boston, MA

Geez, a single-speed Magnavox! I would certainly recommend an upgrade. A single-speed CD-ROM drive can't even play the majority of today's computer games. When you do decide to

continued on page 92

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upgrade, go for a quad-speed drive.

As for the Sound Blaster, if it's the original plain-old-vanilla Sound Blaster, you won't find support for audio CDs. That card lacks a mixer chip. The Sound Blaster Pro, however, does have a mixer chip, so if you run a cable from your CD drive to the appropriate connector on your sound card, you'll be able to get music from the CD player to your speakers.

Das Boot Disk

I can't get my Dark Forces boot disk to work properly. Instead of booting, my system just locks up. The only unusual thing about my system is the fact that I use On Track Disk Manager for my hard drive. Could this be causing the problem?
John Keller
San Jose, CA

Your suspicions are right on target. Using the On Track Disk Manager means you have to go through the boot process a little differently. Instead of trying to boot directly off the boot disk, boot the regular way, and when you see a prompt for you to hit the space bar to boot from a floppy disk, do so. Then insert the Dark Forces boot disk. You should be in business.

Now, if LucasArts would start developing games for Windows, nobody would need to go through this boot-disk nonsense at all...

Problem Scratch

I've been getting intermittent lockups when playing Myst. After much frustration, I noticed that there is a distinct scratch on the face of the CD. Could this be causing my problem?
J. Hasker
Chicago, IL

It's possible, but not probable. While scratches in old vinyl LPs could make your phonograph needle skip, a scratch in a CD-ROM would have to be pretty deep to have any effect. More likely causes include low memory or a conflict between system devices. If you still suspect the disc, Brederbund will be happy to replace it. If you're past the 90-day warranty period, it will cost you $15 plus shipping. Contact Brederbund at 800-521-6263. ■

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- Tips, cheats, and strategy hints from the *PC Games* staff
- Links to the best gaming resources on the Internet
- The most complete set of game reviews online

And much more!

Highlights of the Month

Timelapse: The Expanded Guided Tour

It's about time that a game came along to relegate Myst to the background, and Timelapse: Ancient Civilizations may just be the one to do it. Sterling graphics and intricate puzzles frame your search for the fabled lost continent of Atlantis. After you've scoped out our Guided Tour on page 36, go to our online Expanded Guided Tour for a few more tips.

PC Games Top 25 Gaming Web Sites

We've done the work for you: We went ahead and located the 25 game-related sites on the World Wide Web that any serious gamer can't live without. We picked the cream of the crop, from the definitive company poop on the hottest play to the Web pages created by the most committed enthusiasts. Read about them in "Great Gaming Sites" on page 25, and then link to them all with a single click from *PC Games* Online.

Dennis Weaver: The Uncut Star Talk

Oldies remember him as Chester on *Gunsmoke*; boomers saw him tooling a horse down a Manhattan street as McCloud; and youngsters watch him do his banking from a hammock. Now Dennis Weaver's career has moved into multimedia gaming with his appearance in Philips' Voyeur II. Find out everything he thinks about it in our Expanded Star Talk.

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